Main Title of My Mini-Dissertation: Succinct and Informative Sub-title too

33312345

PS52007D: Research Methods in Psychology

Collaborating Students:

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Abstract

This is where your abstract goes. Note that the abstract has no indentation on the first line, hence I used “APA Body - No Indent” in the styles pane/gallery. An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the important points and findings of your paper. In APA, the abstract is usually a great deal under 250 words. **Please aim for 120-200 words in your Mini-Dissertations**. It should comprise a single paragraph and please don’t make it any longer than it needs to be. A common strategy is to write a sentence for each major section of the ensuing report (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion) – elaborating on key attributes of the paper that merit a reader’s attention. The abstract allows the reader to quickly assess whether the content will be of use to them (in running their own research). Please observe that unlike other paragraphs within the APA 7 style, the abstract paragraph is never indented. There is, however, a short selection of ‘keywords’ that are indented after the abstract. These keywords briefly describe the important ideas in the paper and are used to guide online search engines or databases. **A keywords addendum looks something like this, and you should produce them for your Mini-Dissertation**:

*Keywords:* APA Manual, publications, writing, 5maximum

Main Title of My Mini-Dissertation: Succinct and Informative Sub-title too

This is the start of your Mini-Dissertation. You don’t write ‘Introduction’ or anything like that. Simply use the identical title to the one you used on the title page. This should be page 3.

Each paragraph starts with an indent and for this I use “APA Body” in the Styles Gallery or pane. Remember to use paragraphs well, and avoid paragraphs that are too long. Do not put unnecessary space between these paragraphs…

…Such as this.

Your Mini-Dissertation should be produced according to APA 7 Guidelines with one inch top, bottom, left, and right margins (2.54cm); Times New Roman font in 12 point; double-spaced; aligned flush left; with first lines of paragraphs indented 1.27cm.

If you choose to use quoted text, such as the Block Quote below, do so advisedly and only if absolutely necessary.

Limit the introductory text to material relating to the immediate context of your research questions and hypotheses. Eliminate extraneous content or sections that do not directly contribute to readers’ knowledge or understanding of the specific research question(s) or topic(s) under investigation. End with a clear description of the questions, aims, or hypotheses that informed your research. (Dougal, 2022, p. 03)

Use the “APA body” style for the text in the body of your Mini-Dissertation. If at any point you are uncertain of how to format something, please refer to the guidance on the APAStyle website. Consider your Mini-Dissertation to follow the specifications for a single experiment **professional paper** <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format>

Please spend time making sure your in-text citations are correct. See the guide available on the PS52007D VLE page. But briefly, in-text citations can be placed in parentheses or naturally integrated into a sentence.

* **Parenthetical citations:** There is a correlation between social media usage and anxiety symptoms in teenagers (McGuire, 2019).
* **Narrative citations:** McGuire (2019) found a correlation between social media usage and anxiety symptoms in teenagers.

If a work has two authors, separate their names with an ampersand (&) in a parenthetical citation or “and” in a narrative citation. If there are three or more authors, only include the first author’s last name followed by “et al.”, meaning “and others”. Pay attention to the full stop. It indicates the abbreviation of “et alia” and so the full stop is to be found **always**.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Author type | Parenthetical | Narrative |
| One author | (McGuire, 2019) | McGuire (2019) |
| Two authors | (McGuire & Wright, 2020) | McGuire and Wright (2020) |
| Three or more authors | (McGuire et al., 2021) | McGuire et al. (2021) |

The last section of the Introduction states the purpose of the research. The purpose can usually be summarized in a few sentences. Hypotheses are also included here at the end of this section. State your hypotheses as predictions (e.g., “I predicted that...”), and try to avoid using passive tense (e.g., “It was predicted that...”). You will notice that hypotheses are written in past tense because you are describing a study you have finished.

Method

Participants

This is where you write up the facts about your research participants. Use the “APA body” style for the text in this section. This brief section describes the people who participated in your study. (They should be called “participants,” not “subjects,” by the way.) Mention the number of participants, the percentage of female and male participants, the mean age and standard deviation perhaps, and their ethnicity or cultural backgrounds if known. Any other demographic information would be appropriate here. I usually include the sample size estimate/power calculation here.

Design

Experimental studies require a description of the design of the study. Typically, the independent variables in the study would be described here. For example, the study might involve a 2-by-2 design with one independent variable being treatment/control conditions and the other independent variable being biological sex. It would be helpful to describe dependent variables in this subsection as well. Include information on levels of measurement or how you may have computed your DV. This should only cover the variables relevant to YOUR study, and not waste any time talking about things your collaborators did.

Materials (or Measures)

This is where you put a description of all the materials or measures you used. If you had an experimental task or an interventions (i.e. something NOT questionnaire based) then you should call this Materials. If you study comprised only questionnaires, you should likely call this Measures. Normally, we do not list the consent form as a material. You want to focus on materials or measures that generated data for your study. You may want to use subheads to separate out measures or tasks. Consider including information on reliability or validity if using questionnaires, or information on the task design or parameters if using a task, such as a memory task (number of items, difficulty of items, delay, selection of items, piloting procedures, scoring etc).

**Background Questionnaire**

Maybe your background questionnaire gave you data that you did not end up using for your analysis. That is okay—you can still put information concerning the background questionnaire here.

Working Memory Tests

I might have used two types of memory task, so I will outline them here.

Phonological Working Memory Test. This is information on my phonological working memory test. Note that when I use a level four header (the “phonological working memory test” header is level 4), I cannot set a style for it if the text continues on the same line but in a different style. Thus, I just bold that part of the normal APA text.

**Reading Span Working Memory Test.** This is information on the Reading Span test. So I will describe it here and I will give enough detail to help the reader understand my instrument.

Procedure

Describe how participants were recruited, the procedure they followed during the experiment, including informed consent, instructions, the task requirements and any incentives supplied. It is difficult to be too detailed here, as the goal is to allow the reader to set up an identical experiment. It is feasible to include a very selective figure at some point in the methods section, or to refer to the appendices if you would like to present more complex information. Try to think about what is crucial to permit understanding of the procedure. Anything that is only ‘nice to know’ can go in the Supplementary Materials.

The seventh edition of APA (American Psychological Association, 2020) encourages you to use active voice rather than passive voice, so make sure to write “Participants completed a questionnaire” rather than “participants were asked to complete a questionnaire”. Use the “APA body text” header for the text in this section.

Results

I have lots of results. Here is where I present them. Use the “APA body” header for the text in this section. It may be helpful for the reader if you structure this logically and I suggest around your hypotheses. Repeating your predictions and the type of analysis you are about to present helps ensure the reader follows the storyline. Do not try to interpret your results or explain why hypotheses were or were not supported – that’s for the Discussion.

You will likely have tables and figures in this section too. Present these inline, i.e. at a sensible point in text, so that the reader can refer to them when you are talking about them. Make sure to include means and standard deviations if necessary. Do not include full SPSS output, or unformatted copy and pasted materials. Don’t use complicated colour schemes or intricate patterns. Simple, clear, monochrome palettes work best, reproduce easily and are usually more accessible.

Table 1 is an example from the APAStyle website. Tables will vary in size and structure depending on the data you’re presenting, but APA gives some general guidelines for their design.

To correctly format an APA table, follow these rules:

* Table number in bold above the table.
* Brief title, in italics and title case, below the table number.
* No vertical lines.
* Horizontal lines only where necessary for clarity.
* Clear, concise labels for column and row headings.
* Numbers consistently formatted (e.g. with the same number of decimal places).
* Any relevant notes below the table.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and One-Way Analyses of Variance in Psychological and Social Resources and Cognitive Appraisals

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Measure | Urban | | Rural | | *F*(1, 294) | η2 |
|  | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |  |  |
| Self-esteem | 2.91 | 0.49 | 3.35 | 0.35 | 68.87\*\*\* | .19 |
| Social support | 4.22 | 1.50 | 5.56 | 1.20 | 62.60\*\*\* | .17 |
| Cognitive appraisals |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Threat | 2.78 | 0.87 | 1.99 | 0.88 | 56.35\*\*\* | .20 |
| Challenge | 2.48 | 0.88 | 2.83 | 1.20 | 7.87\*\*\* | .03 |
| Self-efficacy | 2.65 | 0.79 | 3.53 | 0.92 | 56.35\*\*\* | .16 |

\*\*\**p* < .001.

N.b. I forced the pagination a little here to make sure that the tables fit on a single page. You could try to reflow the body text around the tables to avoid large blank spaces.

Results are presented in figure 1 (what you’d call a graph or a picture or a schematic to illustrate your task etc). To correctly format an APA figure, follow these rules:

* Figure number in bold above the figure.
* Brief title, in italics and title case, under the figure number.
* If necessary, clear labels and legends integrated into the image.
* Any relevant notes below the figure.

An example of a figure formatted according to APA guidelines is shown below.

Figure 1

Framing Scores for Different Reward Sizes

Note. Framing scores of adolescents and young adults are shown for low and high risks and for small, medium, and large rewards (error bars show standard errors).

Discussion

I am going to discuss the results here. I also am going to discuss them in light of the research questions. But first I give a brief overview of why, in general, I conducted this study and why the results are important. This should be an accessible presentation of the main pattern of results, but without detailed data. It is important to refer back to the literature you present in your introduction and how the results relate to that literature and any theory.

Conclusions

This should be your big picture takeaway, not just a reiteration of all the results. Is there anything you want the reader to remember?

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations exist in all studies, and try to outline those that threaten the internal and external validity of the study, any bias in the sample etc. I encourage you to think beyond sample size criticisms to more fundamental issues.

Future research ideas is your opportunity to take what you have learned, considering the limitations you have identified and show how you would develop and extend the work you’ve begun. This is an opportunity to show off and win marks. Avoid saying you’d collect a bigger sample size.

As a final point, I would always try to illustrate what these data have contributed to psychological knowledge and psychological theory, maybe any practical applications. Boom!

References

American Psychological Association (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Hunt, E. T. (year). *Book title*. Publisher. <https://doi.org/10.xx.xxxxxxxxxx>

Grossman, L. P., & Mackey T. J. B. (year). Article title: Capital letter also for subtitle. *Name of Journal, volume#*(issue#), pg#-pg#. <https://doi.org/10.xx.xxxxxxxxxx>

Kaffee, D. J., Mitchell, P. J., & de Lioncourt, L. (Eds.). (year). *Book title* (edition, Vol. #). Publisher. <https://doi.org/10.xx.xxxxxxxxxx>

Reflective Account

A reflective account is compulsory for the Mini-Dissertation and we require it to be completed in the spirit of the exercise. It does not count towards the mark, will not influence the mark awarded for work presented above, and should be used to try to compensate for aspects of the work presented, or to complain about group-members’ performance (or lack thereof). Nor is it necessarily an exercise in module feedback – you will have had that opportunity already at time of submission.

Please include at least 100 words, and no more than 500 words (These do NOT count towards your word limit for the Mini-Dissertation). It is an opportunity for you to reflect on the process of your individual research project, your experience of group working, aspects you enjoyed, aspects you found difficult etc. How has this process informed how you will go about your final year dissertation? Of course, if there are skills or techniques that you would have liked to explore in more detail, this might be nice to cover too.

Include between the Reference section and the appendices.

Appendix

Appendix Title Goes Here

Appendices are for the inclusion of specific materials that are of interest to the reader and referenced in text. These are things that you would have ideally wanted to show in the text for an important reason, but inclusion in line would be distracting or bog down the narrative in the body of the paper. Only include appendices that you need your reader to be able to access immediately while reading your Mini-Dissertation, as if you were pointing to it. Your appendices are not a filing cabinet for everything you used in your study, that would be the Open Materials under Supplementary Materials.

The text of an appendix is normal APA text. If I had more than one appendix, I would label them Appendix A and Appendix B. But if there is only one, it is just “Appendix.” You label your appendices according to where they are referenced in the text. The first time you mention “see appendix” would give you appendix A. The next one would be B.

**NOTE:** Supplementary Materials.

You will also supply the following materials via the submission link. You can submit 5 files in total to the submission link, of which 1 is the Mini-Dissertation write-up itself, which will include the reference list, appendices and reflective account in that single document (pdf preferred). Think carefully about what ought to be included and how you will format it to best effect. The completeness and presentation of your Supplementary Materials will contribute to your mark under the formatting rubric element.

**Open Data**: A data set prepared for your specific data set with sufficient information to allow the marker to re-examine your data if necessary. Consider how you label your variables and issues around anonymity.

**Open Materials**: A suitably detailed, complete set of materials to permit replication of your specific study. This may comprise questionnaire items, scoring keys, stimulus materials, Qualtrics surveys or code.