

Parts of a Research Paper

Research studies begin with a question in mind. A paper that describes a particular study clearly states the question, methodology, findings, and other relevant information. Read below for descriptions and examples of research paper sections.

The main sections of a typical APA research paper include:

1. Cover Page
2. Abstract
3. Introduction
4. Background
5. Methodology
6. Results
7. Conclusion
8. Appendices

A more straightforward version of a research paper is the IMRAD format (Introduction, Methodology, Results, and Discussion). However, all of the following sections are typically present in a formal research paper.

Title or Cover Page

Just like any other paper you write, your research paper needs a cover page with your study's title. It also needs your and any co-writers' names and institutional affiliations (if any). Here is an example of a basic APA cover page.

The Effects of Food Insecurity on School Performance

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Abstract

[An abstract](#) is a detailed summary of your study. It should include a broad overview of the paper, your research question, the significance of your study, methods of research, and findings. Don't list cited works in the abstract.

Here is an example of an abstract for a paper on food insecurity.

Poverty affects more than 41 million Americans every day – most of whom are children. Food insecurity and under nutrition have a confirmed correlation to slower cognitive development for children under three years of age. Hungry children cannot form skills as quickly as their peers due to both deprivation of vital nutrients and poor concentration. But, there has been little focus on how these effects scale up in terms of school performance past kindergarten.

Public schools have several programs in place to mitigate the problem of food insecurity, including free breakfast and reduced lunch. We surveyed 100 students at Arbor Elementary School over the course of one school year to see how effective these programs were in improving their academic performance and general contentment in school. The results of these surveys reveal how long children are academically affected by systemic food insecurity, even when their stomachs are currently full.

Introduction

The introduction section tells the reader what problem your study is attempting to solve. You can address the study's significance and originality here as well. Clearly [state the research question](#) in the form of a thesis statement.

Poverty and poor school performance are two problems that keep Americans from reaching their full potential. Alongside poverty is food insecurity, which affects millions of households – and children – every day. But could focusing on one problem help to solve the other? We wanted to find out whether programs designed to reduce food insecurity for targeted children would improve their school performance, and therefore, give them a more successful start in life.

Background

What inspired you to take on this study? What has previous research stated or revealed about this topic? The background section is the place to add historical data or define previous theories that provide context for your study. It's also a helpful place to consider your audience and what information they will need to understand the rest of your paper. Read on for an example of a paragraph from the background section of a research paper.

Food insecurity is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a lack of regular access to food due to one's financial status. According to the Department's report "Household Food Security in the United States in 2016," 12.3 percent of American households, or approximately 41 million people, experienced food

insecurity at some point in 2016 (USDA 2017). The Right to Food was included in the United Nations' 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, while the Food and Agriculture Organization measures food insecurity on a scale from mild (uncertainty about obtaining food) to severe (no access to food for an entire day). (FAO 2019).

Methodology

Knowing whether you used [qualitative](#) or [quantitative](#) methods is an important part of understanding your study. You can list all the ways you collected data, including surveys, experiments, or field research. This section is also known as “Materials and Methods” in scientific studies.

We used qualitative methods to gather data about students who may experience food insecurity. These methods included surveys with various questions that assessed whether students felt hungry, insecure about their next meal, and/or distracted from classwork due to hunger (Appendix A). The surveys were distributed to 100 students in fourth and fifth grade (10-11 years old) at Arbor Elementary School, 50 of whom were recipients of Title 1 funding via free and reduced lunch. The remaining 50 were a control group of students who were not identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. The students completed these surveys at the beginning of the school year, then once every two months until the end of the school year, for a total of five survey periods.

Results

What does your study find? State your findings and supply the data in this section. Use an objective perspective here; save the evaluation for your conclusion section.

The survey results indicated a strong correlation between school performance and food insecurity (Appendix D). Students who answered affirmatively in the surveys were consistently among the lower performing members of their class. Contrasted with their peers who were not identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, these students identified anxiety about their next meal as one of the top three concerns in their minds. Their participation in programs like free breakfast and reduced lunch helped to assuage daily hunger and general happiness, but their concern over food insecurity remained.

Conclusion

Explain why your findings are significant in the conclusion section. This section allows you to evaluate results and reflect on your process. Does the study require additional research?

The problem with systemic food insecurity goes beyond distracting hunger for young students. Even after they've had a nutritious breakfast and lunch at school, concern over dinner was distracting from their school performance. The final survey period, taken just before the beginning of summer break, indicated how much food insecurity can dictate a child's anticipation of a long period without school – and therefore, regular meals.

Having a lower school performance later in life could place these children as future parents in food-insecure households, thus perpetuating the cycle. Solving the cyclical problem of poverty and school performance requires participation from all stakeholders, including schools, city governments, and state and federal legislation that works to move following generations out of the cycle.

Appendices

If you have information that is too dense for the paper itself, include it in an appendix. Appendices are helpful when you want to include supplementary material that is relevant but not integral to the paper itself.

Appendix A

Arbor Elementary School Survey Questions - September 2019

1. Did you have breakfast at home or at school this morning?
2. Did you buy lunch or bring lunch from home this afternoon?
3. Do you feel hungry now?
4. What time of day is it hardest for you to concentrate?
5. Do you know what your next meal will be?
6. Do you ever worry about food?
7. Do you ever feel like there isn't enough food to eat at your house?
8. Are you hungrier on weekends than on school days?
9. Is it harder to focus on schoolwork when you're hungry?
10. Are there issues that are more important to you than food?