

Research in Action Portfolio of Competencies

Reflective Log

I was first introduced to Zoe as my module lecturer for Research in Action (RIA) during Orientation Day. At first glance, the module seemed daunting to me as Zoe gave us a brief introduction to what exactly we would be doing throughout the module and what she expected from us. Nonetheless, I was quite excited to see what the module had to offer us when I came in for the first day of classes. Zoe gave us a full rundown on our assignment, went through a detailed explanation, and divided each of us into groups of four to five, with the members of our choice. I teamed up with my fellow friends, Fatima, Darwisha, Nurul, and Marvin for this assessment. We were required to conduct a study of our choice centering around student wellbeing. Thus, for our first task, we were to come up with a research topic and conduct a Systematic Literature Search (SLS) which, as mentioned by Lamé (2019) is a widely used method for synthesizing scientific evidence in a transparent and reproducible manner, to incorporate all available published research on a specific topic and assess the quality of the evidence. This would help us gather valuable information that was credible and resourceful for our research topic, as well as identifying research gaps in the methodology.

We first came up with our topic as a team, joining our heads together to come up with some interesting ideas that had the potential to be our topic of interest. We decided that we wanted to conduct qualitative research as most of us had never done one and were interested in carrying one out. Each one of us came up with five different topics all centered around student wellbeing. After further discussion, we settled on our first topic: *The Impact of Social Marginalisation of Cultural Celebration on Foreign Muslim Students' Wellbeing*. From there onwards, we immediately worked on determining our research questions, objectives, and hypotheses. Considering that it was our first time doing an SLS, we faced many hurdles. Because of this, I felt slightly overwhelmed and intimidated by the prospect of SLS. The

biggest challenge during the SLS for me was the lack of literature on the web regarding our topic, mainly because our research topic was far too narrow. I had expressed earlier in the discussion that I thought the topic was too specific and that perhaps we should consider changing it, and my point was proved then which caused a slight altercation between my team members and I. Nevertheless, we decided to use our critical thinking skills and rationality, coming to an agreement that perhaps we should consult Zoe first. After gaining her input and feedback, she suggested that we tweak our research topic, which resulted in our new one: *Cross-Cultural Insights: An In-Depth Exploration of Student Wellbeing through Interview-Based Perspectives of Undergraduate Students*.

Once we had settled on our research title, using our SLS findings, we proposed research questions for our study before designing them. This would first require us to complete our proposal forms for the principal investigators (PIs), along with an ethics form for the school research ethics committee. This was a huge challenge for me as I had never done a proper research proposal or an ethics form, but I persevered nonetheless for it served as an unforgettable experience for me to learn something new. Personally, I found it interesting and somewhat fun despite how stressful the workload was, and I am positive this practical skill will stay with me for future research.

We each allocated our tasks accordingly when we did the proposal form, with me taking charge of filling out the key ethical considerations. It was my first time doing something regarding ethics and referring to the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct. It truly was an eye-opener for me, and perhaps this delegated task was a perfect opportunity to broaden my horizons on ethical research. I had gotten inputs from my team members on certain areas of the ethics, and it is safe to say I nailed the first task.

That brings us to the ethics form. As I have mentioned, I had never quite touched on the topics of ethics so filling up an ethics form was a completely new ground for me. Naturally, we divided our tasks amongst each other, with some of us volunteering to take on certain sections of the form. I worked on doing Section G, which was to provide an estimated sample size for our study, as well as how we were to identify and recruit our participants. Additionally, because this module's assignment was about showcasing our competencies, it felt like we were jumping at any given opportunity to take up more sections to do. Come rain or shine, I knew that everyone had their fair share of work cut out for us and I was more than happy to offer my assistance where my team members needed me.

A week goes by, and before we knew it, we were given the green light to proceed with our qualitative study. I was thrilled when I was delivered the news, immediately jumping at the opportunity to start working on the forms required for an interview-based qualitative study. In a qualitative study, especially one that includes interviews, Zoe explained how we needed to have an interview schedule. The purpose of an interview schedule was for researchers to keep track of their progress in an interview as it serves as guidance for us. Both Nurul and I took on the task of making the interview schedule, improving our interview questions to make it feel seamless and natural, and providing the rationale that explains in detail why we ask certain questions. Marvin also lent a helping hand halfway through the interview schedule. However, we were unable to proceed with data collection as a team member had submitted their work late: the information sheet which plays a vital part in qualitative research as it provides participants with an overview of what to expect from the study. Due to this, I was fairly disappointed because we would not be able to collect data in time.

Despite it all, it served as a lesson for all of us to work on our time management and communication skills, and certainly one that we would not forget. On the brighter side of things, I was more than grateful that I was able to learn practical research skills through the wonderful

guidance of Zoe and the company of my team members. Lander et al. (2019) mentioned that gaining an understanding of concepts rather than just memorizing facts is widely recognized as being dependent on the right kind of learning experience, and I stand by that statement for I learned a lot in RIA through my experiences.

I am more than satisfied to say that my time doing the assignment in RIA was nothing short of an emotional rollercoaster, but the lessons I have learned and skills that I have adopted through the module will be beneficial to me in the near future when I would once again conduct a research study.

**Competency One:
Research in Action –
Completion of Research
Proposal**

Research Proposal

Research proposal (1,000 words overall)

Student Name and University ID number:	Marvin Lee Lip Yong (2226262) Fatima Mohamed Mustafa (2244752) Darwisha Tarmizi (2244749) Shania Hazel Koh (2244746) Nurul Aniessa Azmir (2244750)
Proposed Supervisor's name:	<i>Only complete this if you have already been in contact with a potential supervisor who has agreed to supervise you in principle.</i> Zoe Cooke

Psychology Research Area (tick all that apply)

☒ Social Psychology	☐ Developmental Psychology	☐ Biological Psychology	☐ Forensic Psychology
☒ Health Psychology	☐ Individual Differences	☐ Educational Psychology	☐ Political Psychology
☐ Cognitive Psychology	☐ Clinical Psychology	☐ Counselling Psychology	☐ Occupational Psychology
Other: indicate briefly (not included in word count)			

Proposed Study Design (tick all that apply)

☐ Quantitative	☐ Experimental	☐ Applied (with UWTSD students)	☐ Online Questionnaire Survey
☒ Qualitative	☐ Quasi-Experimental	☐ Focus Groups	☐ Online
☐ Mixed Methods	☐ Applied (with external organisation)	☒ Interviews	☐ Lab-based study

I found this research a little difficult due to it being my first time running a qualitative study in the form of an interview with my teammates. It was nothing short of a challenge for me but after a proper and critical discussion, we finally decided on doing interviews for our study.

If Applied, and involving an external organisation, please indicate your plans for gaining appropriate approvals from the organisation: (not included in the word count)

Other study design: indicate briefly (not included in word count)

Suggested Research Title/Area: (between 10-15 words and must reflect the essence of your proposed research question, study design and study population and should be more specific than a broad topic area).

Cross-Cultural Insights: An In-Depth Exploration of Student Wellbeing through Interview-Based Perspectives of Undergraduate Students

I suggested the title of our research after multiple attempts and thorough discussions with my teammates. We gained input from Zoe, herself before finalizing our research title.

Background: 250 words

Why is your study important? What theory and empirical research evidence supports your research question? (Please provide a rationale for your study including a brief review of relevant psychological literature and theory and a minimum of five references).

A group of emotional and psychological conditions as a result of achieving life contentment accompanied with a greater portion of positive emotions in comparison to negative ones refers to wellbeing (Reyes-García et al., 2021). Life satisfaction amongst three indigenous communities was investigated through studying factors affecting personal well-being. Results displayed an average level of life satisfaction, with participants articulating reasons for dissatisfaction. Main factors driving well-being were health and social interactions (Reyes-García et al., 2021). Research on Chinese students explored levels of mathematical wellbeing, defined as one's ability to actualize their inward beliefs and satisfaction in mathematical education. Students prioritized elements that were congruent to aspects of mathematical well being valued by students in Australia (Reyes-García et al., 2021). Another study on children from Eastern and Western cultures on what constitutes their wellbeing identified three perspectives on cultural influence on wellbeing. Children had identical and globalised causes of happiness with variance in meanings on a personal level, common themes of wellbeing that are acknowledged within specific cultures and obscure concepts of wellbeing only specific to certain cultures (Exenberger et al., 2018). Conducted in a multicultural neighbourhood, this study investigated how individuals from various ethnicities perceive their community and whether the community spirit affects their wellbeing. Findings suggested that a sense of community plays a role in influencing wellbeing (Barbieri & Zani, 2015). Research carried out amongst Malaysian undergraduates found that increased openness towards other cultures was associated with wellbeing. Exceptions were present, however, students' wellbeing depended on their tolerance level besides other factors such as academic issues (Lino & Mohd Hashim, 2020). The rationale is to examine ideas of student wellbeing across cultures.

References (not included in word count):

Barbieri, I., & Zani, B. (2015). Multiple sense of community: A mediation model. *Semantic Scholar*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0251551>

Exenberger, S., Banzer, R., Christy, J., Höfer, S., & Juen, B. (2018). The role of community spirit in their Well-Being. *Child Indicators Research*, 12(3), 747–768. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-018-9541-8>

Hill, J. L., & Seah, W. T. (2022). Student values and wellbeing in mathematics education: perspectives of Chinese primary students. *ZDM – Mathematics Education*, 55(2). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11858-022-01418-7>

Lino, M., & Mohd Hashim, H. (2020). Cultural tolerance, positive relationships and well-being in Malaysian multicultural communities. *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 16(4). <https://doi.org/10.17576/geo2020-1604-17>

Reyes-García, V., Gallois, S., Pyhälä, A., Díaz-Reviriego, I., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Galbraith, E., Miñarro, S., & Napitupulu, L. (2021). Happy just because. A cross-cultural study on subjective wellbeing in three Indigenous societies. *PLOS ONE*, 16(5), e0251551. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0251551>

We formulated the research questions together through a thorough systematic literature search (SLS). Yumna was in charge of writing this section.

Please state the main research question(s) or hypotheses(s): (100 words max)

populations or sensitive topic areas, and briefly outline how you expect to manage these risks within your project.

Participants of different categories will be fully informed of the purpose of the study, procedures, and potential risks of the study beforehand. This information will be relayed during the debrief, as well as informing them of their rights to withdraw from the study at any point in time without repercussions. The questionnaire will require information on their race and personal experiences based on their cultural practices, which will be apprised before consenting to participation. All personal data obtained will be strictly kept anonymous and confidential per anonymization protocols. Interviews will be held in a timely fashion, ensuring the participants' comfort, along with cultural sensitivity in mind to ensure inclusivity and respect for other backgrounds.

The group was split up into different sections and I was allocated to write the key ethical considerations for our qualitative study. Referring to the British Psychological Association (BPS) code of human research ethics, I formulated the specifications of what was needed for the research, with some input from my teammates. The well being of participants and ethical issues were justly addressed in this section of the research proposal as it is the most crucial aspect in a research study.

**Competency Two:
Research in Action –
Completion of Ethics Form**

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/

The individual undertaking the research activity

Ethical approval is not required for routine audit within normal educational requirements, and life

Please read the notes for guidance before completing this form.

This form must be completed and approved by the relevant authority.

Checklist for details of process for different categories of research

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

Completing the ethics form was a large hurdle to overcome as it was my very first time having to fill in for one. Many modifications had to be made to the ethics form between my colleagues and I to acquire approval for our research study. We allocated our tasks to different sections of the form and offered my assistance in certain parts.

Sections that had checkboxes were collectively done together as a team.

1	Full Name:	Darwisha Tarmizi, Fatima Mohamed, Marvin Lee Lip Yong, Nurul Anieessa Azmir, Shania Hazel Koh			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Yr Athrofa: Psychology and Counselling			
4	Campus:	IQ, SA1 Campus, Swansea			
5	E-mail address:	2244749@student.uwtsd.ac.uk , 2244752@student.uwtsd.ac.uk , 2226262@student.uwtsd.ac.uk , 2244750@student.uwtsd.ac.uk , 2244746@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:				
For students:					
7	Student Number:	2244749, 2244752, 2226262, 2244750, 2244746			
8	Programme of Study:	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Psychology			
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Zoe Cooke			

The data in this section was taken from Microsoft Teams, which included: Full Names, E-mail addresses, and Student Numbers. Had we not had this information, this application would have been deemed incomplete.

8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.		
	Details of any other primary data collection method:	☐	☒
(this box should expand as you type)			

If NO to every question, then the research activity is considered low risk and you can proceed to the following sections (please refer to Guidance).

If YES to any question, then no research activity can be undertaken until ethical approval has been obtained.

I oversaw the task of completing *Section G: Intended Participants* of the ethics form. As mentioned before, the checkboxes were collectively done together with my teammates Fatima, Nurul, and Darwisha.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

Who are the intended participants:		YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups:	☐	☒
(this box should expand as you type)			

Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected? An estimated six to eight participants will be recruited for the purpose of this study. The sample size was chosen based on Smith's and Osborn's (2007) understanding of qualitative research methods, where they mentioned that a smaller sample is much more suitable for student researchers doing IPA for the first time. In short, it is aimed to prioritize quality over quantity. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
11	Who will the participants be? Participants of the study will be pre-selected university students from different cultural backgrounds. Demographic information will be collected from all the participants for reference in the study. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
12	How will you identify the participants? Participants will be recruited through the purposive sampling method, in which participants of varying cultural backgrounds will be informed about the details of the study and invited to participate in a one-to-one interview. All names of the participants will remain anonymous in respect of their privacy and to protect their confidentiality. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

I had taken up the responsibility to estimate our sample size and determine which type of sampling method my group would use to recruit our desired participants. I had made some changes to question 10, previously referring to Dworkin's (2012) understanding of qualitative research sampling, which I would then change and refer to Smith's and Osborn's (2007) instead.		YES	NO	N/A
		☒	☐	☐
		☒	☐	☐
		☒	☐	☐
		☒	☐	☐
17	consent to being observed?	☒	☐	X
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from any time and for any reason?			
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the questions they do not want to answer?			
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated confidentially and that, if published, it will not be identifiable?			
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation appropriate to the type of research undertaken?			
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
N/A				
<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

Question 11 was also revised. Only making a small change by removing a specific age group as Zoe mentioned that it would be too narrow and may affect our participant recruitment

Information for participants:		YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐

Competency Three: Research in Action – Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Schedule	Rationale
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I've got a few questions for you centred around student wellbeing and how culture plays into it. There are two sections to this interview, just for your knowledge. We will provide a break for you in between. <Check for consent and start recording.>	Useful text to acknowledge the participants in the interview as well as to act as a recording.
Before we dive straight into the interview, I just wanna get to know you a little. So if you don't mind, please introduce yourself, your age, what you study, what gender you identify as, and last but not least, what your ethnic background is.	Useful text to acknowledge the participants in the interview as well as to act as a recording. Marvin also extended his assistance halfway through the interview schedule.
1. So you're currently a student in Swansea, can you tell me from your perspective and experience, what do you think constitutes your well-being as a student?	This is the first relevant experience question. The question helps researchers determine the participants' overall perceptions of students well-being.
2. Thinking back to your own culture, how would your culture describe student wellbeing? Probe: (if any connection is raised.) → <i>With your culture's definition, have you found any similarities or differences with other cultures' definitions of student well-being? If so, please elaborate.</i>	The second substantive question seeks to determine the definition of culture in students' well-being, as well as the participants' understanding of the culture. Additionally, I also provided potential probing questions that would help us student researchers to get a more in-depth answer out of our participants.
3. What role does your culture play in your well-being as a student? Probes: → <i>How do your own perspectives on student well-being correlate with your culture's view?</i> → <i>What does your culture focus on regarding your well-being?</i>	This question provides greater insight into the participants' awareness of culture playing a role in student well-being. Probing questions helps if the participants find it hard to elaborate.

References

Lamé, G. (2019). Systematic Literature Reviews: An Introduction. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Engineering Design*, 1(1), 1633–1642.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/dsi.2019.169>

Lander, J., Seeho, S., & Foster, K. (2019). Learning practical research skills using an academic paper framework – an innovative, integrated approach. *Health Professions Education*, 5(2), 136–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hpe.2018.06.002>