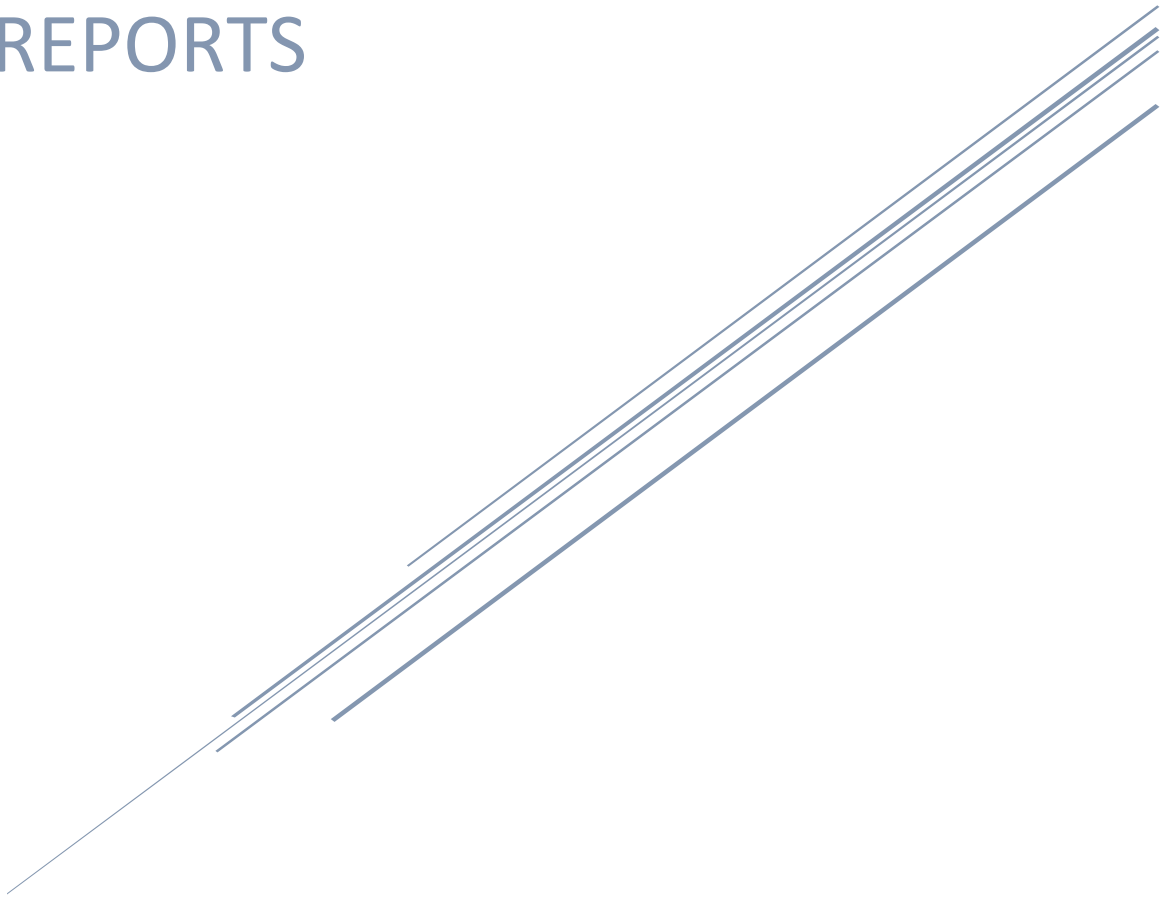


STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL JOURNAL ARTICLES AND RESEARCH REPORTS



University of Wales Trinity Saint David Psychology

Title and authors

The title should convey information about the main aspects of the study Should briefly identify the following:

Variables of interest

Population of interest

Particular method

Needs to be clear, short and informative

- Aim for no more than 15 words
- Short enough not to put the reader off

Abstract

This is a summary of the report and contains information taken from all other parts of the report

Written LAST!

Approximately 120-150 words

Should include key details from the introduction, method, results and discussion

Introduction

A concise review of relevant empirical and theoretical literature from the area under study.

Sets the scene for the study and should aim to provide a rationale

A good research question should be informed by a review of the existing psychological literature

Theory, models, and empirical evidence

The introduction should make the reader understand why your research question is **important** and **relevant**

Start broad, and then narrow down to focus on the literature most relevant to your research question

It should be totally clear by the end of the introduction **why** you are looking at your specific research question

An introduction should:

- Flow
- Be concise and clear
- Tell a strong academic story
- Be unbiased (consider both sides of an argument)
- Cover relevant historical and up-to-date literature (studies and theories) in appropriate detail

- Synthesis, critique and evaluate

The introduction should end with the research question, aims, and/or hypotheses being clearly outlined.

Method

The method needs to provide sufficient methodological detail about the study so that:

1. The appropriateness of the method that has been used can be evaluated
2. The study can be easily replicated

The method should be one of the first sections of a report that is written up immediately after the study has finished, and should contain enough information for the reader to understand and replicate the study exactly as it was carried out initially.

The method is sub-divided into four sections (NB: this may vary in order in some journals, but for the purposes of a psychology report that you will write for your degree, you must always include the four below and in the order set below).

Participants

Contains details of the participant sample.

Information on participants should include:

Number of participants

Sampling / recruitment method utilised (random, opportunistic, etc)

Demographic information (age and gender at a minimum, plus any other study specific information)

Any other study specific criteria (including inclusion or exclusion criteria)

Design

Should contain concise information about the following:

- The type of study design (independent, repeated, mixed, matched pairs etc)
- Definition of the variables included and how they were measured (independent and dependent)
- Inclusion / statement of any other factors that were controlled for

Materials

This section should contain **enough detail** to allow the reader to reproduce similar materials, or to use the materials that have been used in the study.

Details of specific questionnaires (example items, scoring mechanisms, reliability statistics, etc), details of tasks, information about anything that is used to collect data from participants

Procedure

The procedure should be approached in the same way as you would describe baking a cake – it should describe **exactly what was done** in the study, how participants were instructed, and set out in the order in which things (tasks, questionnaires, etc) were completed.

The procedure should be logical, insightful, chronological, and contain sufficient information for the reader to follow.

It should be a step by step documentation of what happened to a participant / what a participant did during the study

Any information regarding ethical issues should also be addressed in the procedure section, including consent and debriefing.

Results

The results section should summarise the data collected and report the type of analysis used (for both quantitative and qualitative).

Quantitative:

Report the statistical analysis that was used, inclusion of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. This section must not include pages of raw data or statistical print outs, but graphs, tables and charts are often seen in longer results sections to break down some of the complex statistical results of that study.

Qualitative:

Report the type of analysis that has been used. Qualitative results sections tend to start with an overview of the results and develop into deeper analysis as the section goes on. Qualitative results sections tend to be longer than quantitative results sections and must contain quotations (where applicable) from participants.

The results section should **not** discuss the findings in detail or discuss the limitations of the study – this is done in the discussion.

Discussion

The discussion is a really important section for any journal article or research report. This section acts as a critical analysis of the study as a whole.

A written summary of the findings should be provided, but this section should not contain any numbers, statistics or quotes from the results section.

Findings should be related back to the hypothesis or research question, and interpreted in relation to the theory and research covered in the introduction.

Shortcomings or limitations of the study tend to be mentioned in this section, and there should be a suggestion of realistic improvements where limitations are included.

The implications / applications of the findings to the field of study as a whole should be considered, and sensible suggestions for future work may be included, also.

The discussion section should end with a strong conclusion.

References

Psychology as a subject and discipline tends to use APA as the referencing style. All undergraduate research reports submitted by students here must include a reference list in APA 7th style.

Appendices

The final section (although this is not always included in journal articles) is the appendices. This is where copies of materials and outputs/transcripts are included. For undergraduate research reports, we require an appendices section to include a copy of all materials used, plus consent and debrief information and SPSS outputs or transcripts.