

Analysis of Empirical Article

Due: Beginning of class on the day your chosen article is assigned

Length: 2-3 pages

The ability to read, understand, and critique the primary literature in a discipline is an important skill to develop. In psychology, the primary literature consists mostly of empirical journal articles -- articles that report the results of qualitative or quantitative empirical research. APA format makes it easy to identify whether an article is empirical -- if it has a method and results section, it is reporting the results of one or more research studies and is therefore an empirical article.

For this assignment, you will choose one of the required readings and critique it more closely. Most days, there is at least one empirical article assigned, but this is not true for every day. For example, on the last day of class (Nov 30), none of the assigned readings are empirical. Your goal in this assignment is to read closely enough to have a complete understanding of the method, results, and conclusions, as well as to form your own assessment as to the quality of the research and the validity of the author's interpretation of the findings.

Structure

Part I: Citation

At the top of your paper, give the complete, APA-format citation for the article you have chosen.

Part II: Summary

Please summarize the article using the following format. Include one paragraph (or set of bullet points, if you prefer) for each of the following

1) *Research Hypothesis/hypotheses*. What is the research question (or questions) being asked and/or what hypotheses are being tested? Some authors are very explicit about this, actually listing hypotheses; others are less so. But all articles should make some statement of the questions the authors set out to investigate.

2) *Research design*. Provide a summary of the most important details of the research design. Include some description of participants (how many and who they are), method (e.g., experimental, survey, longitudinal), and procedure.

3) *Variables*. List the most important independent (or predictor) and dependent (or outcome) variables and how they were measured. (e.g., DV: depression, measured with the Beck Depression Inventory)

4) *Results*. Briefly describe the most important results. Be accurate, but as succinct as possible.

5) *Interpretation of tables*. If there are any tables in the article, summarize the information that is being conveyed. Be complete. If there are sections of the table that you don't understand, summarize what you do understand and indicate the parts that were confusing (e.g., "I didn't know what the heterogeneity column referred to"). If there is more than one table, summarize only the last one.

6) *Interpretation of figures*. If there are any figures in the article, summarize the information that is being conveyed. Be complete. If there is more than one figure, summarize only the last one.

7) *Conclusions*. Briefly summarize the author's major conclusion(s). Were the hypotheses supported?

Part III: Critique

Include at least one paragraph for each of the following two sections.

1) Provide your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the research design and data analysis. You may consider any of the following, or any other factors that you think are important: choice of participants (e.g., how many, demographic characteristics), recruitment strategies, operationalization of variables, type of study (e.g., experimental, longitudinal), instructions, procedures, personnel involved in the data collection (e.g., interviewers, confederates), variables that were not considered or controlled, statistical procedures used. Sometimes authors will provide their own assessment of the strengths and/or weaknesses of their study. It is permissible to incorporate some or all of these assessments into your own paper, but please use your own words to describe the fundamental point(s) and try also to add your own independent assessment. Don't just take the authors at their word -- do your own thinking.

2) Provide your assessment of the validity of the conclusions reported. Are the main statements made by the authors in the discussion section actually supported by their results? Are there other conclusions or interpretations that the authors have either not thought of, or have chosen not to report?