

Format for Academic Papers

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Thursday, June 19, 2008

Research Paper

1. Introduction:

- A clear statement of the purpose and scope of the report
- Context and rationale of the study
- If applicable: Name the theory that guides the research

2. Literature Review:

- Up-to-date review of the existing literature
- Organize according to one or more of the following: theoretical themes, areas, variables investigated, or methodology
- Critical appraisal of the literature with regard to
 - content coverage: is it adequate or comprehensive?
 - conceptualization: are the studies well conceived theoretically or methodologically? Are the studies based on sound theoretical formulation? Do they contribute to theory or model building?
 - methodology: are the designs and methods appropriate, include evaluation of sampling, design (e.g., is the use of focus group appropriate? How about ethnographic interviews?), instrumentation (e.g., psychometric properties of the measures), analysis (e.g., are the statistical analyses appropriate? is there a clear description of the narrative analysis procedure?), discussion and conclusion (e.g., are they logically linked to the data analysis? Are conclusion justified by the findings?)

3. Methodology

- Describe and justify the chosen methodology
- Highlight methodological innovation, if any

4. Results

- Select the most salient results. Be selective, as one cannot report everything
- Present the results systematically (organize under headings, themes, or domains), use tables, charts, diagrams

5. Analysis

- Present how data were analyzed
- Highlight major findings of interest (with regard to the purpose of the study)
- Specify where you are making an interpretation, or offering your own conjecture
- Point out limitations

6. Discussion

- Connect the discussion to the purpose of your study, the theoretical or practical issues it is supposed to address
 - Elaborate on the implications of the findings
 - Explain unexpected or inconsistent findings, address missing pieces or gaps
7. Conclusion
- A succinct statement of the major contribution of the study in terms of theory, research, or application
 - Implication for future work, especially ongoing, or planned work by yourself

Theory Paper

Whereas theory papers do not have a common, fixed format, and different disciplines (and sometimes journals) have their particular preferences. It is good practice to first review sample papers of your target publication before you write your own. The following format covers the main areas that are usually included.

1. A clear statement of the purpose of the paper. It is not a bad idea to start with, “This paper aims at ...”
2. Define the scope of your paper, providing the context and/or rationale
3. Review the literature in a thematically organized manner, identifying the major approaches or theoretical positions/orientations in the area of interest.
4. Specify the major issue(s) you are dealing with, and organize your arguments/analyses accordingly
 - It is useful to use headings that highlights the key point in the section
 - Diagrams and charts often helps to clarify complex relationships and patterns
5. Include alternative or opposite views that have been articulated, as well as those you can anticipate, and try to address or respond to them.
6. Discuss the major implications of your analyses, connect them to current theory, research, and/or practice; identify limitations and/or weaknesses
7. Draw your conclusion by offering a succinct statement of the major contribution of your paper, and future directions if appropriate