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Writing A Method Section

PSYC 308
Spring 2024

Purpose of a Method Section

- Provides a detailed overview of how the research was conducted.
 - *Remember:* The goal is to provide enough details so that study can be replicated.
- Walks readers through the study almost as if they were participants:
 - What happened first?
 - What happened next?

Subsections

- Use the ones that make sense for your report.
- Sometimes you can combine subsections if necessary.
- Typical Headings:
 - Participants
 - Apparatus and Materials
 - Design
 - Procedure

Subsections: Participants

- The accepted term for describing a person who participates in research studies is a *participant* not a subject.
 - Participants in a survey study are *respondents*.
 - Describe who they are.
 - How participants were recruited? Sampling Method?
- Always include a total number.
 - Example: n= 100
 - Any processes of eliminating respondents?
- Include major demographics that may have an impact on the results.
 - Common demographics to include: Age, race & ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation.
 - Only include demographics that are related to your study.

Subsections: Apparatus and Materials

- The apparatus is any equipment used during data collection (such as computers or eye-tracking devices).
- Materials include scripts, surveys, or software used for data collection.
- It is sometimes necessary to provide specific examples of materials or prompts (e.g. an example of an item in the Social Success Scale is “Friends come to me for advice”)

Subsections: Design

- Provides a detailed description of the methodology used in the study.
 - What was the length of data collection?
 - Did we control for any confounding variables?
- Highlight the validity and reliability of the study (if applicable).
- If your study is correlational, mention that and clarify the variables you are studying.

Subsections: Procedure

- A step-by-step description of what happens to your participants experience from start to finish.
- Explain important instructions given to participants, including any ethical considerations:
 - Whether there was informed consent... what did it look like?
 - Confidentiality agreements
 - Data handling procedures

Tips

- Use clear and concise language.
 - Be terse.
 - What would be good to know if you wanted to replicate this and get the same result?
- Do not make statements about what you would have done differently.
 - Save this for your Discussion section!
- It is what it is. Do not represent the methods in any other way than how it actually happened.
 - Review for accuracy, clarity, & completeness



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