GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS I.

Quantitative Empirical Papers in BA and MA Programmes

Present document was compiled by the team for standardizing thesis and research paper requirements.

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CONTENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION	
1.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER	
1.3 GENERAL VIEWPOINTS	
1.4 ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS	
1.5 INTRODUCTION	
1.6 SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LITERATURE	
1.7 METHOD	
1.7.1. The Participants7	
1.7.2. Equipment, Materials, Tools8	
1.7.3. The Procedure9	
1.7.4. Statistical Analysis Plan9	
1.8 RESULTS	
1.9 DISCUSSION, INTERPRETATION, CONCLUSION	1
1.10 REFERENCE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY1	2
1.11 APPENDICES	2
1.12 RECOMMENDED READING	2

1.1 INTRODUCTION 1.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

Cover page. It contains the **title** of the paper (as well as the **subtitles**, if there are some); **the name of the author**; the **goal** [e.g. General Psychological research Paper (code); Affective Psychological Practical paper (code), Thesis (code)]; **date** (e.g. 2013/2014.academic year, autumn semester); **the name of the practice field work or thesis supervisor (not the 'second reviewer'!)**

Declaration of originality. It is a compulsory component of all academic writing. The text:

	independent	intellectual work	the use of	referenced	nublished	or elect	[title] ronic li	is itera	my ture
with	my	signature	that	this	thesis/	/research	1	p	aper
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Ί,	undersigned				[name],	a s	tudent		with

own independent intellectual work, the use of referenced, published or electronic literature occurred in accordance with the general rules of copyright laws. I take notice of the fact that plagiarism is:

- verbatim citation without quotation marks and without exact designation of the reference;
- using content citation without referencing to it;
- the indication of another person's published ideas as my own.

I, undersigned, declare, that I met the concept of plagiarism, and I take notice of the fact that in case of plagiarism my thesis/research paper will be rejected and in such cases disciplinary actions might get proceeded against me.' The declaration is dated and signed.

Contents. It is worth using contents if the text is divided into subsections. In case of longer papers (such as thesis) it is absolutely necessary to have contents. The 'depth' of the Contents is determined by the subdivision of the applied headings (chapters, subsections, etc.). However, it is not worth using subdivision exaggeratedly. It is worth following the guide that one chapter should be the minimum of 3-4 pages and one subsection should be 8-10 sentences long. The chapters and subsections should be numbered in Arabic numerals.

List of abbreviations: Although the explanation of abbreviations should be found in the text (or in the footnotes), it might be optionally recommended to have a list of abbreviations in the paper, especially if there are many in the text. At the same time, unnecessary abbreviations should be avoided.

Abstract. If it is a requirement (see below), an abstract needs to be made as well.

The paper itself. It should follow the principles of construction described hereinafter. The rate of *Introduction – Empirical part* (= Method and Results) – *Discussion* is typically approximately 1/3 - 1/3 - 1/3, but certainly it is worth considering these rates in a flexible way. The most common mistake is that the *Discussion* section is disproportionately short, it is worth avoiding that (see the sections of Discussions, Interpretation, and Conclusion hereinafter).

Acknowledgements. Also in general, but in all those cases when the paper extensive and requires more energy investments it is the correct thing to render thanks to those whose participation substantially contributes to the paper, determining the way of their contribution (e.g. academic or in tenders like OTKA/TÁMOP, with the number of the tender).

Bibliography – see below. Annexes, appendices

1.3 GENERAL VIEWPOINTS

Pages: It is definitely necessary to include the page numbers on the sheets of the paper (this way it can also be used for intertextual references, in case the paper is not divided into subsections within the chapters).

Biding: It is mandatory to bind the paper (e.g. spiral binding), or apply hard binding if it is a requirement (e.g. Thesis).

Composition and grammar: Text construction should be accurate and precise. Although using scientific terminology is essential, it is also necessary to try to use clear writing with complete and understandable sentences. Use the terminology only in reasonable cases. Instead of being circumstantial, try to exploit the given extent wisely. Write down only the ideas that you can take full responsibility for, as it is in your Ethical Declaration attached to your work. Beyond that, you should only provide those ideas of yours in the text that you are fully convinced about as correct and right ideas. It is possible to receive a review or a question regarding the paper at any time, therefore you can only answer them genuinely, if you write your paper/thesis with due diligence. For the sake of the readers try to formulate your text as clear and brief as it is possible.

Formatting: Use 12 font size, Times New Roman and simple line spacing. All margins are required to be 2.5 cm.

Publication: If possible, use duplex printing. The paper should be sent electronically as well to the !!!!! supervisor. The file name should be the author's name and the definition of the genre (e.g. hansen_fieldpracticepaper or hansen_thesis).

1.4 ABSTRACT AND KEY WORDS

The abstract is a short, brief but attention-drawing summary of the whole publication and it contains, summarises its goals, the methods of the performed investigation, the most important results, and the consequences. Although the significance of the abstract is minor comparing to academic writings, in case of journals the abstract is the first filter in the decision-making process regarding getting the paper published. Many times the editor makes a decision on the base of the abstract whether to send the study to the publisher's readers or refuse it immediately. An abstract that is written less properly might even block the publication of an excellent research. Therefore, the abstract should contain its main goals, the studied target group (sample, simple size, features), the participant recruitment methods (sampling), what study design was used, (cross-sectional or experimental, etc.), what the main results of the study were as well as what the conclusion was. It is obvious, that a lot of information should be included appropriately in the abstract, therefore it is worth considering every single word of the abstract very carefully and avoiding meaningless phrases, such as 'further researches are required'. It might be the most difficult part of writing a study so that is why it is worth writing the abstract after writing the study itself.

Different journals vary from each other in what extend they intend to structure the abstract. The use of the structured abstract is preferred, in case of empirical work it should contain at least the following parts: Background/Objective, Method, Results, Conclusions.

The extent is generally 800-1200 characters, approximately 150-200 words. If the study is planning to be published in a journal, it is worth inquiring about the journal's expectations regarding the extent and the formatting of the abstract.

The keywords of the publication's topic are required as well at the end of the abstract, five keywords are generally enough to be provided.

1.5 INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the papers should introduce the raised questions as well as their scientific and practical significance. It can also contain the personal motivation of the author of the paper, but only briefly, from a scientific viewpoint, why they developed that certain topic. The extent of the introduction is 1-1.5 pages long.

1.6 SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LITERATURE

One of the aims of the introduction is to inform the reader about the background and the context of the research. Therefore, the introduction is 'horn'-shaped in the sense that it starts with a wide aspect and ends in a narrow one. It should begin with a general introduction to the problem area, followed by the start to narrow the scope with the reference to previous results others achieved on this field, only the ones that are significantly in relation with subject of your researches. At the same time it is unnecessary to describe the general statements of the problem area as in a textbook, rather to discuss the notions and the theories belonging to the narrow topic. It is important to provide the reference after each idea (see the method hereinafter).

The other aim of the introduction is to reveal the questions that have not been answered satisfactorily by former researches. In the introduction of empirical works usually there is no way to review the entire literature. In this case it is worth introducing the relevant theoretical and research directions and research results (especially those, that have had contradictory results), as well as the critical views on them, underlining especially the viewpoints that will be focused by the certain research. The thesis is an exception from this viewpoint because comparing to professional articles a much greater extent is available to summarise former researches. Despite that you should not intend to review the whole literature entirely by citing former researches: only those papers (research results, theories, alternatives, rival and critical considerations) should be quoted that are directly relevant. Distant, loosely related literary references should be avoided. The relevant literature should lead directly to your work, therefore it should indicate the continuity between the former researches and your work. It is also worth avoiding references to textbooks, rather try to refer to original researches.

In the introduction the conceptual definition of psychological constructs that are applied in the research might be necessary which means that it is necessary to provide what you exactly mean by the certain notion, in what sense you use it. For instance, depression might mean the number of the depressive symptoms as a psychological construction, the seriousness for instance not in a

clinical group, or it might mean the diagnosis of depression. Instruments (the operational definition, for instance, depression was measured by Beck Depression Questionnaire), unless it has a specified reason (for instance, it indicates the reason of the variant results in different studies) as it is a psychometric study, are not described in the introduction.

Further aim of the introduction is to raise the problem of your own research, for instance contradictory research results or few former researches in the given issue. After citing and the former relevant literature and indicating in what way it leads to your topic, it is worth raising the problem as well as formulating the objectives and the hypotheses of the research. The objectives of the research and the consequent hypotheses can be indicated at the end of the introduction. Problems are usually more general questions, hypotheses are rather specific, testable statements. Hypotheses are the kind of assuming statements that have reference to the description of the nature of the relationship among two or more psychological constructions or variables. Therefore, a good hypothesis is for instance - as it follows from the theory – does not only indicate that two groups vary from each other regarding a specific feature, but also, in what way they vary from each other. In case of the investigation of the association of two factors, the direction of the association should be specified as well. It is important to find out how the hypothesis fits into the line of the previous researches, in what way it repeats them or which more current aspect of the issue is being studied. In some cases the research might be descriptive, and there is no way to set up a hypothesis. In case of that kind of research questions it is not necessarily possible to set up a hypothesis. For instance, the proportion of young people suffering from shopping addiction visiting shopping malls in Budapest and in Vienna. At the same time, it is necessary to be careful with this kind of solution, since in most cases there is still a hidden, not clarified hypothesis derives from some kind of a theory in the background of the research, even if on the surface it is descriptive or an exploratory type of study. Regarding the previous example the proportion of young people suffering from shop addiction is higher in higher-income countries might be the hidden hypothesis.

Apparently, the introduction tries to explain the rationale of the certain study, how it fits into the line of the previous studies, how it extends them, what it repeats, and what new aspect of the problem is studied. In order to achieve the objective the introduction starts with preamble the broad problem area, then it narrows to the brief comprehensive summary of the relevant literature. It leads directly to a statement regarding the variables to be studied in the present work and also, to make up the hypothesis of the study.

1.7 THE METHOD

The methodological section's (methodological, but the title is not "Methodology"!) mail goal is to inform the reader how exactly the research was done. This is the part of the research report, which has to meet directly the requirement of repeatability criterion. If it is described properly, another researcher will be able to repeat the research by following the description. The proper description of the method also provides the reader the opportunity to evaluate whether the research itself is appropriate. The description of the method can be practically taken as the implementation of the detailed documentation of the research plan therefore it operates as "manuals" not only for the reproduction or further development of the research, but also, for the critical analysis of the obtained results.

Fostering communication and for the sake of transparency the *Method* is usually divided into the following subsections: subjects, equipment, materials, tools; procedure; statistical analysis plan.

These are typical subsections but sometimes o9ther headings might occur. It is necessary to introduce and justify the method of sampling and the experimental/test set-up.

1.7.1. The Participants

In this part the sample of the study is introduced, the study/observation unit is specified (e.g. person, school class, interaction). It is necessary to present the method of sampling clearly (probability – simple random, systematic, stratified, cluster, etc. or non-probability sampling – convenience, quota snowball, etc.). It is also important to present the inclusion and exclusion criteria, in case there were some.

Besides presenting who the participants were, it is also essential to specify the number of them as well as their features (average age, age deviation, age range, sex ratio and all the rest of the parameters that might be important considering the specific study). The consent rate in the study also needs to be described (what percentage of the contacted people agreed to participate in the study), also, it is necessary to describe the proportion of the respondents who cannot be assessed in any kind of aspects (for instance, it is not evaluable because of missing data).

Depending on the layout of the study all the relevant information about the participants should be provided, such as how they were divided into the experimental groups, with how many elements are the groups formed, how many of the group members had been selected who did not complete the experiment, what the reason was, what incentive was provided for the people to go on with participation, etc.

Here you also need to provide which ethical committee approved your research, and also, the information regarding the informed consent. It means, that in case of special groups (e.g. children under-age, jailed people, hospital patients) in what way volunteering was provided, giving information took place and informed consent was recorded.

In case of high standard study – if it is relevant – here or in a separate subsection ("The statistical power analysis") it is necessary to justify the size of the designed sample by the statistical power analysis. In this case on the base of the previous researches the extent of the expected impact is estimated and according to that the minimum required number of elements is specified in order to be able to keep type II error on the appropriate level.

1.7.2. Equipment, Materials, Tools

In this part in the introduction the procedure needs to be assigned to the given conceptual definition (operationalisation) which is for instance used for measuring psychological constructions. Accordingly, conceptual definition and procedure need to be corresponding. In the method part it is also important to clarify which instruments/which variables join the relations taken into hypotheses.

In case of instrumental measurements it is necessary to describe the tools or materials in details, so that the reader can obtain similar ones. Furthermore, it is also necessary to specify why that certain device/equipment was used. In case of a commercially available device the name of the manufacturer and the number of the type of the model should be specified (including computer programmes that might be used as well as details of showed film parts and the details of musical stimulus material).

In case the instrument is a paper-pencil test, a projective test or a structured interview, the literary references need to be listed so that the reader can obtain similar ones. Questionnaires/tests are not necessarily attached to the study (often it is forbidden because of they are copyright), however, if it is possible it is worth announcing them in the appendices for the sake of the easier orientation. At the same time the announcement of the questionnaires does not replace the description of the instruments. The brief introduction of the instruments is found here as well, including the number of the items, what they refer to, the selection method (e.g. dichotomous or five-point Likert-type scale), and the evaluation method (average, total score or something else). Former relevant data regarding the reliability (internal consistency, test-retest, reliability among encoders) and validity of the instrument needs to be performed to support its adaptability. Divergent routine might occur whether in the current research the instrument's internal consistency index of the sample is announced here or in the descriptive statistics section of the results.

In case of an instrument that was adapted from a foreign language into Hungarian, it is necessary to give the relevant data concerning the process or its source.

The applied stimuli (e.g. pictures) are worth attaching in the Appendices if it is possible. Paperpencil tests, questionnaires should be attached in the same format and order as they were used in the research, the way they were provided to the subjects but only in case the instruments are not copyright. It is primarily recommended in case of academic writings, however, it is not obligatory. In professional articles instruments are only needed to be announced only in case of recently developed scales.

If independent examiners/scorers/judges are applied during the test, it is necessary to describe how the examiners/scorers/judges were trained as well as to introduce what data support the reliability and validity of coding.

It is necessary to provide a detailed description of a made-to-order instrument and in case of complicated instruments a drawing or a photo is recommended to be attached.

1.7.3. The Procedure

In this part it is necessary to describe where (e.g. in a lab, class or on the Internet) and precisely how we implemented the experiment/test from the moment the subject and the investigator got into contact with each other until the moment this relation comes to an end. *The Procedure* section describes the activities of the investigator and the subject during the entire test step by step. This part includes the instructions given to the subject and/or the stimuli conditions and the subjects' expected reactions as well as the record of data. The precise instructions, the text of the information provided before the test, and the text of the consent form are announced in the Appendices.

1.7.4. Statistical Analysis Plan

In this part it is necessary to present the planned statistical procedures that are needed for answering research questions and hypotheses-related decisions and also, the applicable statistical software package or packages. Theoretically the data analysis needs to be considered along the research planning, therefore the researcher knows exactly what they are going to do with the data.

The statistical test formula and the statistical null hypothesis do not have to be introduced, neither does why the certain test has been selected (latter one is only needed to be described if it was selected of several alternatives, or if it is new, unique or non-standard in any other way, or if it is not a commonly used statistical test formula).

If transformation is performed on data (linearization, median split), it is necessary to justify it here, in this section.

If the method of data processing is not trivial, (e.g. forming new variables of the measured data), it can be performed here as well.

If other corrections are performed, e.g. we want to avoid the inflation of error type 1 and define a stricter significance level (Bonferroni correction), it is also has to be performed in this section.

In case of high standard papers the procedure of the treatment of missing data also has to be given.

1.8 RESULTS

In the *Results* section it is not necessary to repeat the statistical analysis plan. Only the result of the analysis is announced in a correct way, without interpretation. It is important that the subjects' personal details must not be announced either here or in the Appendices!

It is worth dividing the *Results* section into subsections in order to have a better overview. The first section is the descriptive statistics. The basic statistics of the test variables are given here. This way we announce the more significant frequency data or in case of variables with high level of measurement the mean and the standard deviation. It is important to mention that the mean is not informative without deviation. The internal consistency of psychometric scales and the measurement reliability on a certain sample might be described here, since reliability is not independent from it....!!!!!! It is worth announcing the descriptive statistics in perspicuous charts, so this way we can avoid announcing the descriptive data fully. At the same time it is necessary to summarize the most significant features in text.

It is worth dividing the following subsections into larger units of analysis as described in the statistical analysis plan. For instance, correlation analyses, multivariate analyses. The analyses certainly need to fit the hypotheses.

The presentation of the results can be carried out in several ways. However, it is important not to duplicate the presentation of the data, therefore they should be presented either in text or in the form of diagrams or charts (which is more clear-cut). The most significant results have to be announced in the text description, but the numerical statements should not be repeated, they should only be referred to the relevant chart.

It is possible to announce the rate, the degree of freedom and the relevant probability level of the statistical test in the text (e.g. t(df)=....; p= or p<, ie t[42]=2.2; p<0.05). In case of high standard it is expected to give the effect size

(t[42]=2.2; p<0.05; Cohen d=0.68). In addition to the numerical specification of the statistical test it is also important to describe the result in text (e.g. "...so the group of footballers tied their shoes faster than the group of water polo players.") It is important that in this section the results are not interpreted yet, only described. Interpretation comes later, in the section of discussion.

- (2) The results, the test rates and the size effects are presented in charts. In this case results should not be repeated in the text, it is only necessary to describe correlations and refer to the charts where the reader can find the detailed data. However, all data need to be given in the chart. The basic principle is that all results are described only once. If the length of the text allows, it is worth giving the confidence interval of the parameters (e.g. averages and scales), because it is very informative in point of the estimation accuracy.
- (3) Results can also be presented in graphics which might make the interpretation of the results easier. However, the confidence interval should be graphically indicated (generally 95% probability) too, since this is the only way to interpret for instance the differences among groups.

When the direction of the significant effect is presented and illustrated it is necessary to decide what medium serves our purpose in the clearest and most economical way. It is important to remember that a non-significant result is still a result, it needs to be recorded. It is a very bad tradition that for instance, the place of the non-significant correlations left blank in a correlation matrix. Even a non-significant effect can be informative for the reader of the study (in case of non-significant results it is worth considering the post hoc statistical power analysis). For instance, of the main effect among three groups is significant, the best option is probably to present the average of each group (with standard deviation) embedded in the text or in a tabular form. In the latter case only the result of the comparison will be described in the text. If the significant effect is a complex interaction, the best approach is to summarize the numerical results in a diagram or in a chart and the text only describes the features of the interaction.

Charts and diagrams can even present complex correlations very effectively. It is worth applying them. If diagrams or charts are used (it depends on us which one of the two!), remember to inform the readers in the text about what kind of data is described in the diagram or in the chart. At the same time the readers have to be capable to interpret all diagrams and charts regardless of the text. Therefore, only the well-structured diagrams or charts are informative. That is why it is not an adequate method to insert the SPSS output graphs into the papers, unless the way of editing allows it. Only the well-edited, high quality and expressive graphs and diagrams should get included in the thesis, facilitating the reception and the interpretation. It means that SPSS diagrams without editing cannot be included in the thesis.

Usually the abbreviations might be resolved in the footnotes of the diagram or chart or -if it is necessary – a short explanation might be given to the readers. All diagrams and charts (separately: Diagram 1, Diagram 2 ..., Chart 1, Chart 2 ...) have to be numbered in order of appearance (reference in the text is based on this order) and have to be *titled clearly*.

The supervisor, the editor or the reader of the article might request for the tabular presentation of data related to the graph. Take care to give a sufficient explanation for the data presented and make sure that the readers are able to interpret them correctly. The title of the chart or diagram serves the same goal, but also, do not forget about the headers of the columns and the rows

regarding the charts, the axis names in case of the diagrams. Also, remember to indicate the units, and the notations that are for the separation of each test group. In case of bar charts indicate the confidence interval as well.

Separate the pre-planned analyses, these are the primary results, from the ad hoc type secondary analyses. These are mostly explorative type of analyses, they are done since the data are there, but the research was not planned to answer that question. The researcher has to be careful with this type of analysis – inherently.

The presentation of the results cannot take place by the announcement of the "output" files of the statistic programmes. The author's task is to present the resulting data in a comprehensible and clear way) following the language of publications).

This chapter of the thesis is only for the presentation of the data and the results, partly in numerical, partly in text form. Interpretation does not take place here!

However, different traditions are possible, diagrams and charts in the text embedded are recommended, unlike the habit that they are attached to the end of the text.

1.9 DISCUSSION, INTERPRETATION, CONCLUSION

The section of Discussion should present whether the study confirms or refutes the hypotheses, if not, whether the results help to form alternative hypotheses, what possible explanations might have for the results, whether these results correspond with other researchers' results, what sources of errors might occur, what follows from all that on the certain research field, what relevance the research results have, what proposals are formulated to proceed.

The section of *Discussion* aims to interpret and evaluate the obtained results in the way that the primary emphasis is on the relation between the hypothesis and the result of the research. To achieve this goal it is appropriate to start this section with a statement that summarises the obtained results. After the summary statements the results should be interpreted and told the readers what we think they mean. In the meanwhile our research results should be tried to integrate with former researches and the relation between our results and the results of former researches should also be presented. In this case it might be necessary to compare our results with others', pointing out the possible reasons for the differences – if there are some. In this section there are no more analyses and data presented. Note, this section is not for repeating the data presented in the results but for discussing and interpreting them.

It is important to recognize the limitation of the research and to analyze the research results from critical viewpoints. The examination of the internal validity of results is important, remember to examine the alternative explanatory options for the obtained results. It should also be examined to what extend it is possible to generalize the results, so what the external validity of the research is like. It is also necessary to deal with all aspects that might weaken or influence the interpretation of the results.

It is worth completing the discussion with disputing what real psychological phenomenon gets comprehensible by the obtained research result – in case it is repeatable and valid – and what

the clinical and practical significance is. It is also useful to discuss, what other unsolved, recent questions emerged during the research.

1.10 REFERENCE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

It is especially important to keep the rules of the references from the professional ethical viewpoints in one hand, and to be able to monitor the credibility of the publications on the other hand. The sources of literature do not have to be fully detailed but adequate to support a statement, theory or idea.

In case of all claims, factual statements and data that are not derived from the researcher it is necessary to notify the original author and what the exact source is12. Since the text would get illegible this way, therefore parenthetical references to the sources are used in the text, and the precise data is provided in the Bibliography.

It is a basic rule that authors cited in-text need to correspond to the ones are found in the Bibliography: there cannot be more or less items in the Bibliography than in-text (certainly it might happen that a source is referenced several times – in this case it is enough to list it once in the Bibliography). It is necessary to check that by all means before submitting the thesis.

Below we take the order of references of the American Psychological Association (APA) as a basis, however, certain journals might require different reference style. It might be possible to vary from the regular order of references occasionally. The "Instructions for Authors" section of a certain journal contains the order of references and other essential information for the authors.

http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx

1.11 APPENDICES

In case of scientific publications it might happen that certain parts are also important that either cannot be embedded or impractical in the text but at the same time they might contain important additional information. Often in case of articles they can be indicated in the Annex in case of academic papers in the Appendices. Recently certain journals allows electronic supplements as well, which means that the Author publishes certain information in an electronically accessible format. In the Annex or in the Appendices there can only be relevant supplements regarding the research. Therefore, for instance questionnaires used in the research might be presented here (as mentioned above, they should not be presented automatically), in case they are relevant and not copyright. Also, formatted charts/diagrams might be presented, that provide further *supplementary* data.

1.12 RECOMMENDED READING

There are several manuals available providing useful assistance for preparation for written and oral publications. We highly recommend to obtain and study these manuals. 12

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Caplin, J. (2008). I Hate presentations. Capstone.

Kazdin, A. e. (1995). Preparing and evaluation research reports, *Psychological Assessment*, 7, 228-237.

McCandless, D. (2000). Information is beautiful. Collins.

Perrin, R. (2012). *Pocket Guide to APA Style*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Roberts, M.C. et al. (2003). The scientific process and publishing research. In: Roberts, M.C. & Ilardi, S.S. (Eds.). *Handbook of research methods in clinical psychology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp. 31-51.

Sternberg, R. J., & Sternberg, K. (2010). *The psychologist's companion: A guide to writing scientific papers for students and researchers*(5th ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Szokolszky Á. (2009). Using scholarly literature in psychology. Szeged: JATE University Press.

Wilkinson, L. et al. (1999). Statistical methods in psychology journals, Guidelines and explanations. *American Psychologist*, 54(8), 594-604.

GOOD LUCK!