

Assignment: APA Style Proposal

Rationale: One of the cornerstones of psychology is the ability to identify important social issues and ask questions that are addressed through empirical research. Psychologists need to be proficient in not only conducting sound research, but also communicating their results in a concise, convincing manner that leads to further research in the field.

With this in mind, this semester you will have the opportunity to complete a number of brief (“low stakes;” i.e., minimal point value) assignments designed to teach you the essential components of psychological research and writing, to practice them, and increase your confidence in consuming and producing psychological research.

Although not all psychological research is applied (designed to solve a problem), we will start with a common problem and you will apply principles in research methods and writing in psychology to address it.

THE PROBLEM: BULLYING

You are working as a school counselor at Shady Way Middle School. This school is best described as suburban, middle-class, with only 15% minority students (roughly 7% Hispanic, 5% Black, and 3% Asian/Pacific Islander).

Recently, many students have come to your office with a variety of somatic complaints (physical things bothering them) and increased absences from school. When you question them, they reluctantly share that they have been bullied and do their best to avoid school.

The administration has approached you to come up with possible strategies to combat this bullying problem. Parents are calling you demanding that “something be done” to stop the bullying of their children. The parents of the bullies are equally outraged that their children have been labeled as “bullies” and being treated unfairly.

YOUR TASKS:

Develop an empirically-based bully prevention/intervention program. This will need to include a plan for program evaluation.

Communicate with administration and parents to inform them about the problem and your plan to address it. This will require you to present the information to different audiences (different “rhetorical contexts”).

Assignment 1: Consult the Literature

Do a PsycInfo search and identify one peer-reviewed recent article (within the past two years) that is clearly relevant to this issue. Write a half-page summary that answers the following questions:

1. How does this article specifically relate to the task?

2. What was the deductive process the authors used and what did they find?
3. What were the limitations and what questions remain unanswered?
4. Specifically, how will this article help you complete your task?

Assignment 2: PEER GROUP WORK: Critical Literature Review

Find five other students whose articles are DIFFERENT from yours.

You will work with this group on synthesizing the articles. That is, summarize the articles in a meaningful way so you can individually move forward on your task.

Write a one-page summary that answers the following questions:

1. In what ways do the articles overlap? Do they have similar methods? Findings? Conclusions? Similar limitations?
2. In what ways do the articles differ? Are there contradictions?
3. How do the answers to these questions (which is a synthesis of the articles) enable you to move forward in your task?

Assignment 3: Develop your intervention strategy (i.e., methodology)

Using what you learned from the peer review, consider the type of intervention you think is most appropriate for this school at this time. In one paragraph, discuss the rationale for your proposed intervention program. You will upload this into the “Proposed Methodology” discussion topic for peer review. You will then comment on at least 3 other students’ proposals.

Assignment 4: Supporting literature

With the help of your peers’ feedback, you should refine your methodology. Using the class database of articles (see Data Base Learning Module in Webcourses), select the 3 articles that are most appropriate and supportive of your proposed design.

- *HINT:* When making your choices, refer back to the questions you answered for Assignment 1.
- *HINT:* When making your choices, consider how the articles tie together. That is, refer back to the questions you answered for Assignment 2.

In one page or less, list the articles you selected and your rationale for your choices.

Assignment 5: Finalize your intervention strategy (i.e., methodology)

Using the literature you have reviewed, finalize your intervention strategy in one page or less. You will post this under the “Finalized Methodology” discussion topic for additional peer review. You will then comment on at least 3 other students’ designs.

Assignment 6: Write-up for psychologists

Write a proper APA-style proposal. Include your literature review, your hypotheses leading to your proposed intervention/methodology, your methodology, and the possible benefits and limitations thereof. You will need a Title Page, Abstract, and Reference page as well.

- *HINT:* See the *APA Style Manual* for questions on style, formatting, and citations.

Assignment 7: Write-up for the School Board (non-psychologists)

Consider how you would adjust your delivery of this information for the School Board at their next meeting.

Assignment 8: PTA meeting presentation

Finally, put together a brief (15 minutes or less) oral presentation you are asked to present at the next PTA meeting. Consider that some of your audience will be the parents of the bullied students and others will be the parents of the bullies.

- *HINT:* Avoid jargon. These are not psychologists. These are emotionally invested individuals.
- *HINT:* Refer to our discussion of persuasion! Consider additional aspects of the message, communicator, and the channel (i.e., the medium of communication).