

How to Summarize Information From a Psychology Research Article

Every article you find will have lots of information in it that is not important for your purposes. Your goal is not to summarize the whole article in a few sentences, but to summarize those parts of the article that are important for your paper. The purpose of this handout is to help you think about how to summarize information from research articles well. This means paraphrasing information in your own words, focusing only on information that matters and turning research and statistical information into simple, understandable English.

Here is some information about an article by Dave Clarke (2006):

Impulsivity as a mediator in the relationship between depression and problem gambling

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of impulsivity as a mediator in the relationship between depression and problem gambling in a non-clinical sample. A questionnaire containing demographic questions, the Revised South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS-R), a depression inventory, and the Eysenck impulsiveness scale was completed by 159 New Zealand university students who gambled for money, aged 18–49 years (mean = 27.9, SD = 10.2). Depression, impulsivity and problem gambling were significantly correlated ($p < 0.01$), after controlling for sex and age. Multiple linear regression analysis of data showed that impulsivity functioned as a full mediator between depression and problem gambling. The findings were related to an integrated model of problem gambling wherein the path of emotional vulnerability (depression) to the severity of problem gambling, is mediated by an impulsive trait. Therapies for impulse control could be supplemented with treatments which alleviate emotional depression in impulsive gamblers and thus attenuate the strengths of the effects of depression and impulsivity on problem gambling symptoms.

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And here is a table from the same article, which reports correlations among the study variables:

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations ($N = 159$)

Variable	Depression	Impulsivity	Problem gambling
Depression	–	0.48 ^{***}	0.26 ^{***}
Impulsivity	0.48 ^{***}	–	0.26 ^{***}
Problem gambling	0.25 ^{**}	0.26 ^{***}	–
Mean	27.70	10.29	1.09
SD	9.62	3.88	2.12

Note: Pearson product-moment correlations appear below the diagonal; partial correlations controlling for sex and age, above the diagonal. All tests are one-tailed.

^{**} $p < 0.01$.

^{***} $p < 0.001$.

1. Let's say that the only reason Clarke's article interests you is that one of the things you are writing about in your paper is the relationship between impulsivity and problem gambling. Given your purpose, which of the following looks like the best (i.e., most clear, concise, non-plagiarized) summary of the article to you?

a. Clarke wrote an article titled "Impulsivity as a Mediator of the Relationship Between Depression and Problem Gambling". The purpose of the study Clarke reported was to investigate impulsivity as a mediator of the relationship between depression and problem gambling in a sample of people who were non-clinical. The article showed a small positive correlation between impulsivity and problem gambling, which means the two variables are related.

b. In a study done in New Zealand, Clarke (2006) showed that impulsivity and problem gambling are weakly associated with university students.

c. In a study focused on gambling among university students in New Zealand, Clarke (2006) demonstrated that more impulsive students tend to have more gambling problems. Using data from a sample of 159 such students, the author found a small, positive correlation between impulsivity and problem gambling.

2. Questions about option "a" (from #1):

How would you fix the citation in option "a" to make it right?

If good writing is concise, does it make sense to quote the full article title within the text?

Option "a" uses some words from the first sentence of the abstract, but the language is not exactly the same. Is there a plagiarism problem?

3. Questions about option "b" (from #1):

Does option "b" really say anything about the relationship between impulsivity and problem gambling?

Does it make sense to say that variables are correlated with university students?

4. Below are three ways Clarke's finding (about impulsivity and problem gambling) could be summarized. What's the main way in which they differ? Which one do you like best?

a. Clarke (2006) has observed a positive correlation between impulsivity and problem gambling.

b. In a study involving 159 college students in New Zealand, Clarke (2006) found a small positive correlation between scores on an impulsivity questionnaire and a problem gambling questionnaire.

c. A positive association was observed between trait impulsivity and excessive gambling in a study involving 159 college students who identified themselves as gamblers (Clarke, 2006). (Non-gamblers did not participate in the study.) Although Clarke's (2006) study was conducted in New Zealand, the researcher used well-established questionnaires that have been used in prior research from various countries. The results might generalize, therefore, to young American gamblers.

5. Let's imagine Clarke had a different research design. Instead of what he reported above, he compared a group of highly impulsive college students (identified through diagnostic interviews) to a group of college students low in impulsivity. If Clarke used groups, he probably wouldn't report a correlation between impulsivity and problem gambling. Instead he would compare the mean problem gambling scores between the two groups. If the highly impulsive group scored a lot higher than the other group, would it be appropriate for you to write that Clarke (2006) demonstrated that impulsivity and problem gambling are related?