



## Known But Neglected: Reporting Psychological Research Among Nigerian Psychologists

Chidozie E. Nwafor<sup>1</sup> Euckie .U. Immanuel<sup>2</sup>, & Harry Obi-Nwosu<sup>3</sup>

Nnamdi Azikiwe University<sup>1</sup> &<sup>3</sup>

University of Nigeria Nsukka<sup>2</sup>

Correspondence author: [dozie2001ng@yahoo.com](mailto:dozie2001ng@yahoo.com)<sup>1</sup>. Phone:08034388071

### **Abstract**

*This article is designed to reinstate the need for psychologists in Nigeria to brace up to the state of act and discipline scientific researchers are known for internationally given the sensitive nature of psychological finding. To understand this need, 54 journal articles published in 5 different randomly selected psychological journals between 2006 and 2013 in Nigeria were reviewed. These articles were reviewed in terms of the general editing and formatting in relation to standard APA format, adherence to APA standard in method and presentation of result and referencing. The result showed that there is still need to embrace the international standard for conducting research and reporting the finding in the psychological journals in Nigeria. The conclusion and recommendation was focused on harmonizing the standard for psychological journal and a call for the refocusing of psychological research to applied issues that will solve the everyday problems faced by Nigerians.*

**Key words:** Research, Report, Standardization, Nigeria, psychologist

### **Introduction**

The emergent of psychology as a scientific discipline that study human and animal behavior and mental processes was made possible following the laboratory experiments by Wilhelm Wundt at the University of Leipzig Germany 1879 (Boring 1950). Subsequently, psychologists around the globe establish different psychological laboratories and have continually adopted the scientific technique in their inquiries about phenomena. In Nigeria the first psychology department was established in 1964 at the University of Nigeria Nsukka and 50 years after there are over 25 major psychology departments in the different Universities found in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria.

The main aim of establishing these departments is to train more human resources that will help the educators to develop optimally the Nigerian child on one hand and on the other hand to help the adults understand themselves and erase the misconceptions and over-generalization about themselves through relevant basic and applied indigenous research (Obi-Ikeguna,1981). Unfortunately, most of the

psychological researches conducted in Nigeria today are done in the academic arena by the academia purposely for the basic need of getting promotion rather than for applied purposes of solving concurrent indigenous issues which can then propel the discipline into a greater height and relevant in Nigeria. The fallout of this nefarious rush for promotion is mediocrity of the quality of research published by Nigeria psychologists and this further down the possibility of psychology emerging as a trustworthy discipline in Nigeria. This fact was the major concern of Onyeizugbo (2002) when she highlighted some factors that impend the evolving of empirical tradition in Nigeria psychological research to include factor such as

- Ghetto syndrome: That is the tendency of some psychologists from a particular field of specialization getting locked –up in their way of doing things to the point of alienating themselves from developments in the other fields of psychology.
- Nigeria factor: That is the lack of principles, materialism (greed) and a general attitude of “anything goes”.
- Learned helplessness or what Obi-Nwosu (2013) termed “slave mentality”: That holding firmly to only what was taught in the class without updating with the state of act from time to time.
- Others include lack of sponsorship, poorly equipped laboratories and poor leadership.

However, every scientific discipline share three common and interrelated denominators or features which include the use of systematic empiricism, the production of their finding for public knowledge thereby making them verifiable, and examination or studying of solvable problems( Onyeizugbo, 2002; Stanovich, 1989). To achieve these features, psychologists follow certain systematic steps in their inquiries about phenomenon which include:

- i. Identification of problem and forming of relevant hypothesis(es)
- ii. Designing of pattern that will help in conducting the study, conducting the inquiry to collect
- iii. data analysis and interpretation of the data
- iv. communicating or reporting the finding for public knowledge.

The present study focused on the last step of scientific inquiry (i.e. communicating or reporting findings from psychological studies). Psychological issues are very sensitive, therefore conducting and reporting of psychological finding must be done systematically to encourage verifiability, internal and external validity of such report. To achieve this, certain standard were set by psychologists in different international boundaries to guide conducting and reporting psychological research (descriptive, correlation/ predictive, or experimental).



Prominent among these standards for publication is the American Psychological Association publication manual 6<sup>th</sup> edition (APA). Fortunately, all the psychological Journals in Nigeria adopted the APA standards which are contained in (APA, Publication Manual, 2010). However, the question is do the Nigerian Journals adhere to these publication guidelines in conducting and publishing their research especially in the method, result, and referencing sections of their report.

### **Method**

A total of five volumes of Journals edited and published in Nigeria were used in the present survey. One volume each was selected from 3 different Departments and two from a psychological professional body. The volumes were published between 2006 and 2013. The selection was done using simple random sampling and the following Journals selected include: Practicum Psychologia volume 3, 2013; Nigerian Journal of psychological Research volume 5, 2006; Ife Psychologia volume 20 (2) 2012; Nigerian Journal of Clinical Psychology volume 8 (1 &2) 2010, Nigeria Clinical Psychologist volume 3, 2008. The main reason for opting for these five Journals was because they were published by trained and practicing psychologists. The five selected volumes contained 54 articles out of which 41(75.9%) were empirical articles and 13(24.1%) were non-empirical or qualitative articles. Only the empirical articles were considered in the final analysis.

### **Procedure**

The selected articles were reviewed by three peer-reviewers of psychological Journal and the articles were coded based on their compliance or non-compliance to APA publication manual (2010). The criteria for coding include the following

- The information contained in the participant section (age, gender, ethnicity, other features)
- Type of research design
- Instrument standardization ( standardized instrument, samples items in the scale, how the scale is computed and scored, evidence of reliability( Cronbach alpha, interrater, split half, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis)
- Types of statistics and effect size
- Dichotomization of continuous variable in ANOVA
- Referencing style
- General formatting of the articles

### **Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis is descriptive statistic (frequency and percentages).

**Results**

**Table 1: Frequency and percentage of required information for participants**

<u>Other features</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	
Reported	33(80.5%)	30(73.2%)	6(14.6%)	39(95.16%)
Not reported	8(19.5%)	11(26.8%)	35(85.4%)	2(4.9%)

The result showed that 19.5% did not report information about age of their participants, 26.8% did not give information about the gender of their participants and 85.4% did not give any information about the ethnicity of their participants and 4.9% did not provide at least one feature their participants. The implication is that such research will be very difficult to verify or replicate and the external validity is highly questioned.

**Instrument**

**Table 2: Frequency and percentage of required information for instrument**

<u>Item samples</u>	<u>Computation</u>	<u>Standardize scale</u>	<u>Reliability</u>	
Reported	14(34.1%)	19(46.3%)	30(73.2%)	27(65.9%)
Not reported	27(65.9%)	22(53.7%)	11(26.8%)	14(34.1%)

The result showed that 65.9% did not report the item samples, 53.9% did not report how the instrument was scored and interpreted, 26.8% did not report whether the study was conducted with a standardized instrument, and 34.1% did not report the reliability of their instrument. Even among those that reported, 37% did not report their reliability appropriately. The implication is that such studies may lack internal validity.



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## Research design and statistics

**Table 3: Frequency and percentage of required information for research designs and statistics**

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<b>Design</b>	<b>frequency/percentage</b>
Cross sectional research design	34(82.9%)
Quasi-experimental design	2(4.9%)
Experimental design	5(12.2%)
<b>Statistics</b>	
Correlation	8(19.5%)
Multiple Regression	6(14.6%)
T test	6(14.6%)
ANOVA	16(39%)
Chi square	2(4.9%)
Other descriptive statistics	3(3.3%)

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The most common design recorded is cross-sectional survey design 82.9%. This implies the most of the studies are descriptive research (e.g. survey and observational research) which finding cannot infer cause and effect because of lack of experimental manipulation and planned effort to control extraneous variable. Unfortunately the results of most these descriptive researches were interpreted as if they were experimental studies. Which raises a major question; does the use of inferential statistics make a study an experimental research?

The most common statistics recorded was ANOVA 39%, however it was discovered that the independent variables that were in continuous scales were dichotomized using mean split in all the studies involving ANOVA a practice that is highly rejected in all the standard international journals (see. Cohen,1983, Dawson & Weiss, 2012; MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher, & Rucker, 2002; Streiner, 2002). Also none of the research involving inferential statistics reported the effect size of their results, making inferences difficult to accept, because some of the significant results might have very low effect size (see Cohen 1965).

### Referencing

The result showed that 30(73.2%) of the article used APA referencing format while 11(26.8%) did not adhere to the APA referencing style. Even among those 73.2% that adhere to APA style, 25.1% still have some minor errors.

### **Result tables and presentation**

19(46.3%) followed the APA style for table presentation, while 21(51.2%) did not adhere to the APA style for table presentation as they used crossed lined tables. Also all the articles fail to adhere to the standard of putting in italics all alphabets that represent statistical formulas. The general formatting of the articles showed that 16(39%) were consistent with the APA style while 25(60.97) were not consistent with the general APA formatting style.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

The main aim of this article was to provide evidence about the quality of the empirical articles that were published in Nigerian psychological Journals. A Journal report portrays the quality of scholars in a particular field of study and show reliable and valid advances in concurrent issues in the discipline. More importantly, it gives the public opportunity to verify the information provided in the Journal. Therefore Journal articles are not just what academia conjures to get promotions but a reference point for finding solution to human problems.

Evidences from the analyses showed that over all there is an urgent need to improve the quality of reporting style in Nigerian psychological Journals to meet up with the international best practice. While there are many other issues that were very important in conducting and reporting empirical psychological research such as the content of introduction, appropriateness of the participants, instrument, reliability and validity parameter, design, statistics, and discussion, we just focus on whether some of these features are merely present in the report and leave such other issues for future research. The results showed that some none negligible percent of the necessary information were missing in most of the empirical articles. These missing information reduce the overall quality of the article.

### **Recommendations**

Recently, because of the rush for number of international Journal articles for promotion rather than quality of research, a good number of business oriented individuals have floated many types of unprofessional online Journals. These Journals claim to follow APA style and some of them published all sort of unethical and unedited psychological reports which are not verifiable because it lacks the needed information that aid verifiability. Some of these substandard online Journals have been black listed by National University Commission (NUC) and Nigeria Psychological Association should do the same. Onyeizugbo (2002) suggested that the Nigeria Psychological Association should come up with a unified format for publication of the different types of research. Also all the



Journals to be recognized by NPA must be registered with NPA and there should be periodic assessment of the quality of studies published by these Journals.

Editors of psychological Journals should make sure that the works they published are reviewed and edited properly. Since Journals usually have focus, the editors should make sure that the articles they publish are within their focal points and they should encourage research report on applied issues in the society. While researchers on their own part should always revisit publication manual to update themselves on the current writing and reporting best practices. As noted by Onyeizugbo (2002) a good scientist should possess qualities such as interest, perseverance and quest to improve the existing status quo. Therefore researchers are required to routinely report all the information necessary in the method and result sections including the participants, instruments and procedures, design and statistics.

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### **Author Biography**

**Chidozie Nwafor Edwin** holds Ph.D in Developmental Psychology and is currently a lecturer at the Department of Psychology Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State Nigeria. His research interests include Identity development, language development, aggression and executive functioning development.

Email: [dozie2001ng@yahoo.com](mailto:dozie2001ng@yahoo.com); [ce.nwafor@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:ce.nwafor@unizik.edu.ng)

**Harry Obi-Nwosu** is a senior lecturer and a Clinical Psychologist at the Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State Nigeria. His research interests include impact of governance on the citizens' psychological wellbeing, adapting forensic assessment to suit cultural belief, governance and identity formation and psychosomatic symptoms.

Email: [royaldioka@gmail.com](mailto:royaldioka@gmail.com); [ho.nwosu@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:ho.nwosu@unizik.edu.ng)

**Euckie .U. Immanuel** is a senior lecturer and a Clinical Psychologist at the Department of Psychology, University of Nigeria Nsukka. Her research interests include spiritual wellbeing, coping, assertive behavior therapy and gender issues.

Email: [euckieo@yahoo.com](mailto:euckieo@yahoo.com)