

EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION THROUGH INSTAGRAM TO IMPROVE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COMPETENCE TO USE THE APA FORMAT

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University students usually face multiple difficulties when writing academic texts, particularly when dealing with their Bachelor's or Master's thesis. These difficulties include the use of the APA reference and citation format while avoiding plagiarism. This study describes an innovative online educational intervention through Instagram aimed at improving university students' competence to use the APA reference and citation format, and to avoid plagiarism.

An Instagram open account called @APA_rte was created for the purpose of the study. The efficacy of the intervention will be tested by using a quasi-experimental design (pre-post intervention, with control group). Participants were university students from three Spanish universities. Prior the intervention, participants (509 students in the experimental group and 133 in the control group) completed questionnaires assessing their competence for using the APA reference and citation format, self-efficacy for writing and defending academic texts, anxiety towards writing and defending academic texts and perception of the utility of Instagram for academic purposes. Most of the participants were psychology or education undergraduate students (90.37%), 9.63% were Masters' students, and 83.49% were woman. Students in the experimental group were asked to enrol in a 20-weeks-length intervention through Instagram, taking place from October 2021 to March 2022. They followed the @APA_rte Instagram account and, each week, they had to participate in two quizzes regarding the use of the APA format (APA Quiz). They received information about APA by post and interacted with the Instagram account in different ways, including asking direct questions to the account managers. Participants in the control group did not follow the Instagram account, and thus did not participate in the intervention. After the intervention, students in the experimental and control group will complete questionnaires assessing the same variables as in the pre-intervention assessment, adding, in the case of the experimental group, their satisfaction with the educational intervention.

Results from the pre-test show that the students' competence for using the APA format is low ($M = 7.32$ out of 16) and writing anxiety levels are quite high ($M = 5.65$ out of 10), while self-efficacy towards writing academic texts is medium to low ($M = 26.86$ out of 40). Participants perceive Instagram as a useful and attractive tool for learning academic contents ($M = 30.90$ out of 45). Thus, an educational intervention such as the one proposed here is strongly needed and result of interest for the students. In fact, @APA_rte has attracted a lot of attention among the University community, and it counts with more than 700 followers who regularly interact with the account. Preliminary data show that students are satisfied with the account's content and that its use is helping them to acquire competence in the use of APA format. The strengths of conducting an educational intervention via Instagram and the main challenges faced will be discussed at the conference. This work has been supported by Universidad de Zaragoza: PIIDUZ_2_2 and Universidad Pontificia de Comillas: 2021-07.

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