Organising your results and discussion

**Instructions**

1. First decide whether the results and discussion will be kept together as one section or as two separate sections. Answer the following questions to help you decide:

* When you read 3-5 similar papers, what is typical in your field?
* After looking at the journal guidelines and 3-5 papers recently published there, how do they organise the results and discussion?
* Is there a particular trend or preference in your lab or research group?
* What is your personal preference? Why?

1. Organising your results: decide which of the organising principles might be the most appropriate for your results:

* By research questions/aims/hypotheses (if you had more than one)
* From general to specific (Inverted Pyramid principle)
* By topics and subtopics
* By the studied material or case (if your aim is to compare these)

1. Map out your results in the table below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Overall organising principle | Results sections | My notes for each results section | Section organising principle | Notes organised |
| e.g. by hypotheses | Section 1 title/theme |  | e.g. From general to specific (Inverted Pyramid principle) | What will be the most logical way to organise the results in each section? |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

1. If you’re combining results and discussion, after presenting the main results of each section, you will need to:

* Compare them with the literature (show similarities or differences)
* Explain your results (if surprising or interesting)
* Explain differences with the literature (if such were noted)
* Interpret your results (tell us what they mean)

1. This is the structure that you will follow. We will look in more depth at discussing results in Day 4 of Week 5, but you can already start brainstorming ideas in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Structure: Results and discussion combined** | | |
| **Section** | | **My notes organised** |
| Results section 1 | |  |
| Discussion | Comparison with literature |  |
| Explanation |  |
| Interpretation |  |
| Results section 2 | |  |
| Discussion | Comparison with literature |  |
|  | Explanation |  |
|  | Interpretation |  |
| Results section 3 | |  |
| Discussion | Comparison with literature |  |
|  | Explanation |  |
|  | Interpretation |  |

1. If your results and discussion are separate, organise your discussion into the same sections or themes as the results in the same order. Follow the structure below. Decide which key results you should discuss.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Structure: Discussion as a separate section** | | |
| **Section** | | **My notes organised** |
| Discussion paragraph 1 – corresponding to results section 1 | Restatement of main result 1 |  |
| Comparison with literature |  |
| Explanation |  |
| Interpretation |  |
| Discussion paragraph 2 – corresponding to results section 2 | Restatement of main result 2 |  |
| Comparison with literature |  |
| Explanation |  |
| Interpretation |  |
| Discussion paragraph 3 – corresponding to results section 3 | Restatement of main result 3 |  |
| Comparison with literature |  |
| Explanation |  |
| Interpretation |  |

1. The first step is to compare your findings with the literature. Focus on the findings of the first research section:

* Go to the literature review section where this theme was discussed
* Identify any findings from previous studies or theories that are similar to or different from yours
* Note the specific finding/theory aspect in the table above and include the reference

1. Now we want to offer explanations for our findings. Ask yourself:

* If your findings are different from those of previous studies, ask yourself why. Give a specific explanation such as
  + Sample type,
  + Sample size,
  + Used methodology,
  + Research context,
  + Research tools,
  + Theoretical framework,
  + Data analysis techniques,
  + Other:
* If your findings are in other ways surprising or unexpected, ask yourself why. Provide a logical explanation.
* Complete the table above.

1. Finally, you can also interpret your findings. This involves telling us what the findings mean. Ask yourself: what is the main take-away message for the reader from my results? Complete the interpretation row in the table.