A Comparative Analysis of the Abstracts Published in Iranian Journals of LIS and their compliance with APA Manual

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ABSTRACT: This survey concerns providing a comparative analysis of the abstracts published in Persian journals of Library and Information Science (LIS) and their compliance with APA manual. This study is based on a content analysis method. The data were collected by studying the abstracts. Besides, 6 journals in the field of Library Science were chosen for this study. Abstracts of 4 recent issues out of each journal have been studied. Results revealed that abstracts published in Fasiname-ye Ketab were the most consistent ones with reference to APA manual; and the abstracts published in Library and Information Science Quarterly have the least degree of compliance. The findings of the current study showed that a structured format upholds the quality of abstracts.

Key words: abstracting, library and information science journals, structured abstract, unstructured abstract.

INTRODUCTION

Every year a huge amount of information in different formats are published in different journals. Rooted in this fact, scientific journals are the most important channels for these publications. However, these ever-increasing scientific products made studying the complete text of the articles almost difficult and sometimes impossible. Consequently, studying article abstracts became more effective and eminent to spare time, energy and cost. To put it into a simple language, abstract is somehow the summary of the whole article and expression of the required information for readers.

It should be noted that an accurate abstract comprises a comprehensive outlook for the complete article. That is to say, by a glance to this outline, a way can be paved to evaluate and read the entire article. In fact, abstracts are written to reflect the content of the article and give the summary of the whole article by which time and cost will be saved for readers. Therefore, it is worth mentioning that authors, editors-in-chief, and publishers had better ponder this issue.

As it has already been stated, the mounting amount of information causes abstracts to be distinguished factors in the chain of information dissemination. Furthermore, they are considered as instruments to select the intended articles as well as a source of indexing for both researchers/students and organizing institutions, respectively.

Diba et al. (2006) proposed that a non-standard development of abstracts would lead to a deviation by which the quality and quantity of information may get influenced. Accordingly, it is necessary to develop abstracts based on simplicity and precision in echoing the article content. Likewise, unity and consistency in an abstract assure saving time, energy and cost, leading to clarity for readers. Therefore, a firm and standard abstract, in one sense, plays an indispensable role for information retrieval and on the other, librarians as the principal individuals for organizing and retrieving information are to be the role models for the other authors. In contrast, up to now, it has not been studied how and to what extent Iranian Library and Information Science (LIS) researchers follow the standard rules of abstracting. Hence, this study concerns a comparative analysis of the abstracts published in Persian journals of LIS and their compliance level in connection with APA⁴ manual. As far as it is known, APA manual is one of the most frequently employed styles proposed by social science researchers. Even though many Iranian journals recommend the authors to follow the citation rules given in the mentioned manual, the other aspects maintained in this manual are neglected. For that reason, abstracting has

⁴ - American Psychology Association
turned into one of those neglected aspects in APA. Due to this fact, the researchers selected APA as the comparison criteria for abstracts. According to this manual, each abstract should comprise the following five components:

1. Problem/purpose/objective/research question/focus of study,
2. Sample/population size/characteristics,
3. Method (e.g., data-gathering procedures, intervention, research design),
4. Findings, and
5. Conclusions/implications/recommendations.

Most researchers conducted on this topic are as follows:

Diba et al. (2006) compared Persian abstracts of Imam Sadeq University's dissertations from 1989 to 2003 on the basis of international ISO standards. They concluded that the standard level of Persian abstracts in those theses with ISO Standard was 71.95%. Additionally, political science faculty, between the faculties in the given university, was the best in the meeting of these standards with the compliance of 74.66%. It should be also stated that abstracts developed by librarians had 75.52% matching proportion in comparison to the other students with 60.55%.

Dayyani and Shirdel (2007) studied and compared Persian abstracts appeared in humanities journals based on 214 ISO standard. It has been found that 60.37% of abstracts were indicative and 39.63% were informative. Furthermore, the average percent of compliance of indicative and informative with 214 ISO standards was 83.14% and was 78.70%, respectively.

Vazirpour and Sedehi (2011) conducted a research on Persian abstracts of M.A. Library Science theses on the basis of ISO standards. They found that the standard level of abstracting in M.A. theses for both Northern-Tehran Islamic Azad University and University of Research and Sciences were acceptable. Additionally it has been interestingly found that, the more recent abstracts were the more standard ones.

There are also several researches carried out by Hartley and Onwuegbuzie who are prolific researchers in the study of abstracts. For instance, Hahs-Vaughn and Onwuegbuzie (2010) in a study investigate 2 years of abstracts of empirical research articles submitted to the journal of Research in the Schools and to determine the extent to which the abstracts were underdeveloped, thereby suggesting the need for structured abstracts. Of the 74 articles reviewed, 44.3% contained an underdeveloped abstract. Articles with underdeveloped abstracts were approximately twice more likely to be rejected than were articles with developed abstracts. Hartely (2007) conducted many researches on the effectiveness and benefits of structured abstracts and comparison of them with the unstructured ones. For example, he and Betts (2007) in one of the studies found that the structured abstracts had more details compared to the unstructured abstracts and reading process and finding the data in the abstract are facilitated.

Moreover, there are some other researchers in this field; for example Nakayama et al. (2005) investigating the application of structured abstracts in 30 medical journals. After the analysis of 304 papers, they found that 62% of the papers had structured abstract and 38% lacked structured abstracts. Budgen, Burn and Kitchenham (2011) in a comparative study on structured and unstructured abstracts found that the structured abstracts were more comprehensive and clear than the unstructured one. Only 15.79% of the unstructured abstracts had comprehensiveness and clarity while 85.00% of the structured abstracts had good condition. They found that using a structured format during abstracting can help the less-experienced researchers.

It can be generally implied that most relevant researches in the literature paid a considerable attention to a highly qualified and structured abstracts in the articles. Accordingly, lots of studies have been done for abstracting. However, there is almost no research to study and compare abstracts of Persian LIS journals, specially based on APA manual.

Consequently, this study tries to answer the following questions:

To what extent are abstracts of LIS journals according to APA manual?
What are the quality levels of abstracts in each six LIS journals?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a content analysis methodology to compare Persian abstracts appeared in LIS journals and to what extent they are based on APA manual. The data were collected by studying and analyzing the abstracts. The population of this study includes: Faslname-ye Ketab, Journal of Academic Librarianship and Information Science, Iranian Journal of Information Processing & Management, Library and Information Science Quarterly, Ganjine-ye Asnad, and Research on Information Sciences & Public Libraries. It is also important to mention that the articles of the four recent issues for each journal have been studied. All abstracts were analyzed according to the five given components in APA manual. Finally, SPSS software has been employed to analyze the gathered data.
RESULTS

Totally, 245 abstracts were studied. Iranian Journal of Information Processing & Management had the highest rank with 70 articles. Library and Information Science Quarterly and Faslname-ye Ketab had 44 articles. Research on Information Sciences & Public Libraries had 31 articles. Journal of Academic Librarianship and Information Science had 29 articles. And Ganjine-ye Asnad had the lowest rank with 27 articles.

The compliance level of abstracts with APA manual

To start with, we should mention that the researchers have named the abstracts based on the degree to which they have followed the five components in APA manual. That is to say, if abstracts contained 1 component out of those was named as one-pointed abstract. The ones that contained 2 components were classified as two-pointed abstract; and so on for the other ones.

As it has been shown in Figure 1, there are some articles in which the authors did not paid a serious attention to abstracting criteria. In other words, the findings indicated that 14 articles had only one-pointed abstracts. Furthermore, 15 articles contained two-pointed abstracts. Nevertheless, four-pointed abstracts, in 104 articles (42.4%), outnumbered the whole classes of abstracts and they were relatively more consistent with APA manual. Lastly, there were 84 articles (34.3%) in which the abstracts had the full compliance with APA manual.

![Figure 1. Compliance level of abstracts based on per component in APA manual](image)

Ranking of Persian LIS journals based on abstracts

In figure 1, the average compliance of abstracts is shown for each journal in isolation. As it can be seen, the highest compliance of published abstracts belongs to Faslname-ye Ketab with 4.79 mean score. In contrast, Library and Information Science Quarterly has the lowest rank with the mean score of 3.37 between the six journals.

It is also necessary to mention that abstracts in Faslname-ye Ketab have a compliance level of 95.8% with APA manual, which is the highest level of compliance between the other journals in which the compliance level of Library and Information Science Quarterly is 67.4%. In figure 2, the compliance level of abstracts with APA manual has been shown for each journal.

CONCLUSION

As a matter of recapitulation, each abstract has been scored from zero (lowest) to five (highest), based on the components given in APA manual. Accordingly, it has been found that abstracts published in Persian LIS journals had an average score of 3.94. In other words, they had a 78.80% compliance level with APA manual. Furthermore, if those journals are supposed to be classified on the basis of Likert Scale (from lowest compliance to highest one), it can be stated that they are at “high compliance” level with regard to APA style.
The highest rank of compliance with APA manual belonged to Falname-ye Ketab (95.80%), demanding on the editors-in-chief' special attention to abstracting. In spite of the fact that Library and Information Science Quarterly was the first journal gained the scientific journal title, it has been ranked as the lowest one in its abstract compliance with APA manual (67.40%). Therefore, they are required to spend more deliberation on abstract comprehensiveness. The second notion that should be mentioned here is that abstracts published in Falname-ye Ketab are in structured style. That is to be inferred, if the editors-in-chief encourage authors to follow a structured style for abstracting, this may lead to a more reliable abstract in association with APA manual.

To enclose, it is suggested that abstracting should be considered as an important issue in writing an article. Therefore, both editors-in-chief and researchers had better support the special orientation toward a more consistent and unified abstract by which the whole article will be improved in quality.

![Quality level of article abstracts for each journal](image)

**Figure 2. Quality level of article abstracts for each journal**

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**REFERENCES**


