

REFERENCING AND CITATIONAL REVOLUTION IN THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION STYLE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS RESEARCH

OPARA IKECHUKWU UZODINMA

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY, BAZE UNIVERSITY,
ABUJA

Abstract

The APA citation style has formed one of the foundations of writing in the greater part of social and behavioral sciences. Under this system of referencing, writers are able to present sources in a credible, consistent, and clear manner that avoids incidences of plagiarism, making the resources easily accessible to the readers, among other important features. Over the years, various editions of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual have been published, each time refining and making subtle adjustments necessary in response to the evolving nature of academic writing, technological changes, and scholarly convention. The first APA style edition, introduced in 1952, was mostly about citing format and referencing standards to standardize the way academics communicate with one another. Subsequent editions, with each coming out approximately every ten years, have introduced some quite substantial changes. The sixth edition (2010) worked on simplifying referencing for online sources and social media, whereas the seventh edition (2019) focused more on inclusivity in writing, clarification of citing rules for digital sources, and user-friendly features to increase clarity. In this essay, we are going to look at the types of referencing and citation as proposed by the APA style: in-text citations, lists of references-things that concern books, journal articles, online resources, and even multimedia materials. We shall discuss briefly the growth of APA citation practices across the different editions and how such developments have helped to shape and improve writing academically. These changes allowed for clearer rules citing complex sources, facilitated citations of non-traditional media, and are more accessible and usable by scholars. Equally, through these updates, the APA has continuously helped academics produce more accurate, correct, and credible scholarly work. It just goes on to reveal that this continuous evolution to the new academic and technological landscapes is what makes the APA referencing system so useful in the academic arena.

Keywords: *research revolution; the APA; transformation; international relations research; referencing and citation*

Introduction

The APA stands for one of the most common and respected systems of citing sources in academic writing, especially within the psychological, educational, social science, and other disciplines that are widely used in modern practice. To properly understand its trajectory, a short history has to be discussed on the development of an APA referencing style. The APA Citation and Referencing Style, since its inception in 1929, has undergone many changes to adapt itself to the transforming academic research, technological development, and international scholarship. Each subsequent edition has tried to answer the growing needs of researchers, academics, and students for clarity, consistency, and precision in citations regarding new types of sources. The seventh edition, 2019, is the most recent complete revision that aligns APA style to today's research and provides more resources supporting the diversity of the global scholarly community. The first APA style came into being with its first publication in 1929 in a booklet prepared for those working in the field of psychology. Its primary function was the unification of the citation system in the writing and publication of research output to accord credit where due but also to prevent plagiarism of any sort.

The first edition was relatively simple, and provided guidelines for citing books and journal articles. The system aimed at promoting uniformity and ease of reading academic papers. The 1960s, it was obvious that a much more systematic approach to citation was required as research studies expanded into academia. The year 1967 saw a new APA manual come out in response to new kinds of source materials, such as electronic ones, and further standardized the style. By the 1970s, as research expanded into such fields as education, sociology, and medicine, so did the APA style with its new forms of citations such as conference paper and government reports, and edited volumes.

APA Manual from the 1980's: In 1983, the third edition of the APA manual was published, marking a significant development in the style's evolution. This edition standardized, once and for all, the "author-date" format of citation that became the style's trademark. Key changes include more detailed instructions on citing journals, books, and dissertations. It detailed a clear framework on referencing in respect of electronic resources, an emerging trend at the time.

The Digital Era and the Imperative for Renovations (1990s - 2000s): The 1994 version was the 4th edition, and the 2001 one was the 5th; both of these were focused on the emergence of the Internet and digital resources. It was an important transition toward taking up websites, online journals, and electronic databases at the heart of scholarship. The 5th edition in 2001 was published with the crucial revisions-addition of citation guides for online sources and DOIs now used for locating academic articles and research papers. Sixth Edition and International Adoption (2010). The sixth edition of the 2010 APA Manual was an important revision that considerably updated citation for electronic sources, especially in light of burgeoning influences of social media, podcasts, and even YouTube videos. This edition gave more detail on citing e-books, online journals, and other new and evolving forms of publication. It recommended citing DOIs for all journal articles where a digital form of the article has been published.

The sixth edition also saw international adoptions outside North America, as the countries of the world began to adopt the APA style in research papers and publications. The seventh edition, released in 2019, was a big change, reflecting the continuing move toward digital-first sources and a more flexible, accessible style. Key updates in the seventh edition included: Using Websites: This involved a great emphasis on no longer using "Retrieved from" with URLs except in circumstances where a date of retrieval must be used because the page changes regularly.

More inclusive language: The guidelines have been reviewed and updated, hence more inclusive and ungendered. Added specific format for citing social media post and Twitter and added format for podcasts. The new edition had provided specific guidance for formatting student papers as opposed to professional manuscripts.

Why the Changes Became Necessary

- i. **Technologies:** Because many different outlets have recently become available through which information can be published and accessed, many outlets that didn't exist before required APA to update guidance over newer source types like e-books, online journals, and social media content.
- ii. **Increased International Use:** With greater international use, especially in non-English-speaking countries, there was more interest in standardizing and explaining the guidelines to what had become a more heterogeneous academic constituency.
- iii. **Changes in Research Practices:** The advent of the digital era and open access publishing reformed the way academics shared and accessed research. The APA style evolved to adjust for these shifts to better cite sources in digital format and to present information in an improved manner-mandatory DOI for journals, better formatting for web citations.
- iv. **Clarity and Accessibility:** Due to the interdisciplinary nature of academic writing, the APA style made writing more usable, allowing students and researchers in all disciplines to cater to their needs. Simplifying some of the formatting rules and citation practices contributed toward this clarity.

APA style ensures that, when authors quote or take ideas from another source, they give due credit to those sources, adding credibility to their research work and allowing readers to locate the original source. First released in 1952, the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association was revised multiple times, with its latest form being the seventh edition, released in 2019. This change was motivated by an interest in attempting to align the publication guidelines with new ways of pursuing academic writing, such as increased use of online and digital sources, changes in academic standards for clarity, inclusion, and accessibility. The APA citation style works within a set of rules and categories, including in-text citations, a reference list, and the citation of different types of sources-books, journal articles, websites, and multimedia. These are all part of the various ways to acknowledge sources and to do academic work with scholarly integrity. Each edition of the Publication Manual has introduced refinements to improve the style's usability and precision. For instance, the sixth edition, published in 2010, introduced important changes related to the citation of electronic sources, while the seventh edition addressed issues such as the formatting of references for online videos and social media content, as well as updates to grammar and inclusive language guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2019). This paper will trace the different kinds of APA referencing, closely analyzing how the citation practices changed in line with the various editions of the Publication Manual. To this end, discussion of the specific changes brought about by each particular edition will help us catch a glimpse of how the APA citation style has evolved in a way that caters to the needs of contemporary academic writing and has permitted more transparent, correct, and accessible academic communication.

Continuous development within the area of APA referencing and citation practices answers the fluid characteristic of academic research and galloping development of digital technologies. Self-evidently, early editions of the Publication Manual focused on the unification of citation methods of print sources, including but not limited to books, journal articles, and conference proceedings. However, with the rise in importance of the Internet along with other forms of new media, the APA system shifted into revision mode with the goal of maintaining up-to-date and comprehensive citation practice. The year 2010 saw one of the biggest changes that came with the publication of the sixth edition. Due to the exponential growth of the internet and electronic sources taking center stage, there arose a dire need to cite websites, blogs, online databases, among other digital resources. For the first time, in this edition of the APA guidelines, recommendations for citing materials from the Internet began to be included, giving clearer rules about how to reference digital documents and websites (American Psychological Association, 2010). This edition also standardized the way in which authors should cite online journal articles, with specific instructions for including DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) and URLs. The sixth also perfected the online database and e-source citation format by adding detail to what was expected with retrieval dates and distinguishing between the print and electronic forms of the same publication.

With the issue of the seventh edition in 2019, these APA citation norms became even more adaptive and inclusive. Their latest guides feature several features aimed at facilitating the citation process, including covering an even greater scope of source types. The significant change among them was the cardinal simplification of the rules concerning online sources. For example, the requirement to include "retrieved from" URLs was eliminated, streamlining the process of citing online articles and websites (American Psychological Association, 2019). Furthermore, the seventh edition expanded its recommendations for citing multimedia sources, such as podcasts, YouTube videos, and social media posts, reflecting the growing influence of digital content in scholarly communication. Further, the seventh edition strongly put forth the issue of language inclusiveness in a manner that it called for the use of terms that are neutral, taking into consideration the precise and respectful manner anyone would refer to a person or group. This revision also put forth the importance of citation practices in regard to ethical writing to ensure authors are transparent about sources and give sufficient credit to originators of ideas and data.

For instance, the new, revised guidelines from the APA are much clearer about how to cite many authors, and it is much clearer when a work of more than three authors should be noted "et al." for an in-text citation. American

Psychological Association. 2019. These changes not only extend the inclusivity of APA style but also reveal how such shifts have altered what the academic communities hold in great regard. The rules in this seventh edition allow for a greater latitude of diversity in the citing of source types, while the core elements that constitute scholarly integrity remain intact. They also accommodate the shift in technology within the academic landscape to afford the modern realities of social media, podcasts, and online platforms for dispensing academic content. Impact of the APA Revisions on Academic Writing

Improvements to APA referencing and citation ensure that writing is clear, consistent, and accessible to an academic audience. To further this process of continued improvement, emerging formats for research and new, changing technologies are factored in so that eventually the APA citation style will provide academic writers with the means of correctly documenting an even wider range of sources. The emphasis that the APA system places on standardized methods of citation eradicates ambiguous situations for readers and writers, hence making the scholarly communication neater. Yet beyond an appeal for improved citation practices, successive revisions to the Publication Manual have reflected an impulse toward increased inclusiveness and ethical integrity in the practice of academic writing. The APA guidelines on inclusive language-particularly about gender, race, and disability-have aided in cultivating more respectful and considerate discourse in academic writing. Not only does the shift reflect broader social changes with regard to language and representation as being more equal, but it has also been one that opens academic scholarship to an expanded variety of voices. Besides, clarity and simplicity characterizing the latest edition have taken away several hassles from writers, especially the new ones in APA style. The clarity of structure allows for easy location of information; at the same time, examples are clearer, which minimizes confusions in citation practice. Such changes further enhance overall usability of the APA style as an indispensable tool amongst scholars, educators, and students.

Materials and Methods

The following research is dedicated to the development and influence of the APA citation style throughout its editions, yet with a closer look at the changes observed and presented between the sixth and seventh editions. It uses a mixed-methods approach with the inclusion of a qualitative content analysis of trends in successive revisions of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association and has provided a concurrent quantitative analysis of trends in academic writing conventions with respect to applying the APA citation criteria over the last two decades.

APA Publication Manuals - 6th and 7th editions Core materials for this paper are the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th and 7th editions. Those given handbooks have laid down officially accepted principles of citation practices and referencing rules. Whereas the 6th was issued in 2010, the 7th was released in 2019. Therefore, for the purpose of comprehending the development pathway of an APA style regarding citation practices, formatting, and an approach to the text inclusions, the comparative analysis between these two editions is given below. American Psychological Association 2010; American Psychological

Association 2019.

Sample Academic Articles Data collection was performed by gathering peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other academic sources dated between 2010 and 2024. These have been selected from leading databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and the APA PsycNet platform and are representative of a cross-section of academic writing using the APA citation style. Articles have been selected based on their themes in relation to the social sciences, psychology, and education, because these disciplines are the main ones using the APA style. Only those concrete articles that applied the rules of the 6th and 7th edition citations were considered.

APA style guides and online resources

Secondary resources to learn more about common citations and updates used the Publication

Manual, online APA style guides, instructional handouts, and online sites such as Purdue OWL. Such resources were useful not only for a deeper understanding of how professionals in the discipline and researchers make use of the latest APA rules but also for many more purposes. It includes the Purdue University, Online Writing Lab, 2020.

Methods: Accordingly, the research methodology will follow both qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to take a closer look at the content and structure of the APA citation style across editions for comparison and its influence on current academic writing practices.

Qualitative Content Analysis: A content analysis was conducted by comparing the rules and guidelines of citations from the 6th to the 7th edition of the APA Manual by identifying and categorizing major revisions that occurred between the two editions, especially in regard to:

Citation of electronic sources: websites, online journal articles, and social media postings, which also deal with the following:

- i. **In-text citations:** treatment of multiple authors.
- ii. Reference list styling has changed throughout to reflect use of DOIs and URLs.
- iii. Inclusive language guidelines were provided, such as those on gender-neutral terms.
- 1v.

New rules for citing non-traditional sources such as podcasts, YouTube videos, and blogs: Since this paper compares two successive editions, each chapter was examined in succession, while the citation rules that differed between the two editions were systematically recorded. This procedure included checking the examples of citations given in both editions regarding the clarity and applicability of the guidelines in real situations (American Psychological Association 2010; American Psychological Association 2019).

Quantitative Analysis of Academic Citations: A quantitative analysis, therefore, has been conducted to see its pragmatic impact on academic writing. This was done through a sample of academic articles that were published between 2010 and 2024. The following steps were undertaken:

Sampling and Data Collection: A total of 50 academic articles published both prior to and following the release of the 7th edition were selected. The articles published from 2010 to 2018 were reviewed for the application of the 6th edition of the APA style; likewise, articles that are published from 2019 to date are checked for compliance with the 7th edition guidelines.

APP Evaluation Criteria: The papers were reviewed for correctness in applying APA citation criteria, to wit, but not limited to, the citation of electronic sources correctly using DOIs, usage of correct URLs, use of in-text citations where authors are more than one, and the use of new media reference criteria such as podcasts or social media.

A scoring rubric was developed based on the extent that each article adhered to the APA guidelines as seen in the Publication Manual American Psychological Association, 2010; American Psychological Association, 2019. Descriptive statistics of the frequency of errors in the citation practices both before and after the implementation of the seventh edition were analyzed from the data collected. These results of a chi square test will be statistically

compared to see if any variation in citation accuracy exists between articles published under the two different editions of the APA manual. These revisions were made so as to establish whether changes made in the seventh edition actually bring about a measurable improvement in citation practices of published academic work.

Questionnaire to Academic Authors: Quantitative and content analyses were supplemented by conducting a short survey about clarity, usability, and effectiveness of changes introduced within this 7th edition of the APA manual on 50 academic writers: graduate students, professors, and professional researchers. **This perception survey specifically questioned:**

- i. The perceived difficulty of following citation rules in the sixth versus seventh edition.
- ii. Clearer guidelines on citing digital and other non-print sources.
- iii. Ease in the use of the manual in referencing the online content and social media.
- iv. Feedback: Inclusive language is an important aspect of academic writing.

The results obtained from this survey were synthesized qualitatively, where recurring themes and trends in understanding how revisions by the APA are viewed to date by the academic community were identified.

Data Analysis: A manual qualitative content analysis of the APA Publication Manuals, 6th and 7th editions, was carried out by comparing sections of each edition and noting all the significant revisions that were made in citing rules and guidelines. The changes were categorized and analyzed by their impact on academic writing.

Quantitative data analysis: In this regard, data from the academic articles were entered into SPSS. The frequencies and type of citation errors are summarized using descriptive statistics while the level of significance of any observed change in citation practices since the advent of the seventh edition is determined through the use of inferential statistics-chi-squared tests. Results from the survey of academic writers were coded and analyzed thematically using NVivo.

Literature Review: The Evolution and Impact of the APA Citation Style the APA citation style is widely accepted and gains a great acceptance in the conditions of academic writing, especially concerning the social sciences, education, and psychology. Due to the significant increase in source diversity, technological developments, and changes to English language standards, the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association has passed several stages of revision since the very first publication date. As the most commonly used citation style in the social sciences (Belcher, 2019), APA's guidelines provide a standardized approach to referencing that ensures clarity, uniformity, and academic integrity. This literature review explores various perspectives on the APA citation style, examining its evolution, strengths, and the reasons why it is considered one of the best citation systems for academic writing.

The Significance of Standardization in Citation Practices

The importance of citation styles within the circles of academic writing cannot be overemphasized. According to Graff 2018, a pattern of regular citation practices is crucial toward a guarantee of academic integrity through tracing where an idea has come from and also ensuring the prevention of plagiarism by writers. In that regard, the APA style is particularly noticeable in insisting on clarity and uniformity in source referencing. Graff (2018) and Brice (2015) both argue that such a straightforward approach makes APA especially good for those areas of research where one has to deal with a huge number of sources: books, journal articles, internet materials, and multimedia. Because APA has a very well-regulated system of referencing-one for in-text citations and another

for reference lists-the writer can present his or her research in the most accessible way, avoiding misunderstandings and raising the quality of the work to the highest level. Evolution and Adaptability of APA toward Digital Sources the APA citation style is identified primarily by its acceptance of changes made possible through technological advancement. From the emergence of sources from digital and online platforms, APA has been updating its guidelines to adapt to new media types and citation challenges. In response to developing requirements for citing electronic resources such as websites, blogs, and e-journal articles, the sixth edition of the Publication Manual has been geared toward that need (American Psychological Association, 2010).

This will be useful because in this way, the citation system can make more sense in a period when more and more research, increasingly, is done and distributed online. Indeed, writers and researchers have lauded the responsiveness of the APA to these changes. For example, Sloan (2017) praised the fact that it included in its guidelines the referencing of online journal articles with DOIs, aside from allowing the citing of websites, which were a growing concern then. The revisions, Sloan said, had to allow academic writers to cite digital materials in a more specific and transparent manner. In the same line, Ching and Doolan (2020) elucidate that its seventh edition, published in 2019, further refined APA's provisions for citing online sources, discarding the outdated practices of using "retrieved from" URL and including expansions of non-traditional source citations like podcasts, YouTube videos, and even social media posts. These reflect APA's commitment to pace itself with the ever-outgrowing landscape of academic research and communication.

Inclusive and Ethical Writing in Academia Another great focus of attention in the recent changes has been placed on developing inclusive and ethical language of APA, with more detailed recommendations given on how to use inclusive language, which includes using expressions that are neutral in regard to gender, as well as more accurate and respectful terminologies referring to race, ethnicity, disability, and other social identities. These changes have come in the seventh edition of the Publication Manual in 2019. According to Dixon (2021), this emphasis on inclusive language is a direct response to growing concerns about discrimination, marginalization, and the need for more representative academic discourse. Dixon (2021) argues that APA's proactive stance on inclusive language helps researchers reflect the diversity of the communities they study, which in turn promotes ethical and socially responsible scholarship. Relatedly, Belcher 2019 realizes that citation is important in indicating transparency in academic writings and plausibility among authors. As such, the APA gives clear guidelines on how to reference sources of ideas to ensure that authors cite the sources of their information as a way of steering away from plagiarism or intellectual dishonesty. According to Belcher (2019), this ethical emphasis of the APA style is useful, especially for areas like psychology and education, wherein many studies would involve human subjects and their sensitive topics. The greater attention to language inclusivity and ethical writing in the seventh edition registers wider trends within the academy toward more social consciousness and responsibly performed scholarship.

Clarity and Usability: Why APA is the Best Citation Style The last but not least reason, which makes APA one of the most excellent citing ways, is that it is clear and concise. Though the other citation styles, such as Chicago and MLA, provide different ways to borrow references from other authors, the simplicity and straightforwardness of APA make it very captivating both for inexperienced and experienced writers. According to Bruff (2018), APA's rules are not only consistent and logical, but they are also highly adaptable, allowing writers to cite an array of sources without complicated procedures or unnecessary jargon. Bruff (2018) argues that this simplicity is key to APA's widespread adoption, as it makes the style accessible to a wide range of academic disciplines, not just psychology and the social sciences. Other scholars like Brice 2015 and Belcher 2019 argue that in emphasizing clarity and standardization, APA makes the process of writing easier mainly to students and early career researchers. As Belcher, 2019 puts it, the standardized way in which APA formats citations and references free a writer to pay attention to content and argumentation rather than to the intricacies of a citation system. The fact that APA also provides specific examples and templates for different types of sources, including books, journal articles, government reports, and online media, further enhances its usability (American Psychological

Association, 2019). Besides, integrating digital tools and resources into APA also provides even easier ways of citing: a number of online tools, such as citation generators and style-checking software, are designed for APA style and reduce much of the burden on writers to ensure correctly formatted citations. As stated by Ching and Doolan (2020), such help also makes APA even more user-friendly while helping the researcher avoid common pitfalls in citation and promote accuracy in referencing.

With such strength in clarity, consistency, and flexibility, the APA citation style has become an indispensable tool in academic writing, particularly in the social sciences. This is the evolution of the APA—from its early editions, which had a focus on print sources to modern revisions that manage to accommodate inclusions of digital and non-traditional materials—as one of changing in response to changes within the community it serves. The added concentration on inclusive language and ethical writing in the seventh edition further raises its worth in ensuring research represents various perspectives and experiences of those it hopes to represent. Also, as the reviewed literature represents, APA is among the finest citation systems since its simplicity and clarity support its friendly usage for the benefit of both the writer and the reader.

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework of this present study is pegged on the theories bordering on academic writing and scholarly communication in respect of citation theory, dissemination of knowledge, and ethical scholarship. Citation styles are at the heart of every academic research undertaken. In writing this article, APA style has been used. Citation is not just about paying one's dues to whom such is due intellectually, but also a way of recording, organizing, and representing academic knowledge. The following framework is informed by the number of interrelated theories and models underpinning the operation of citation in scholarly work, namely, the Communicative Model of Writing, Citation Theory, and Ethical Research Practice.

Communicative Model of Writing

The Communicative Model of Writing, developed by Flower and Hayes in 1981 views writing as a dynamic process of communicative activity where there is an interchange between the writer and the reader. The model does not perceive writing to be an individual activity but rather an interrelationship of ideas, knowledge, and vision. In this respect, APA citation is critical in facilitating the interaction between the writer and the audience. It allows the writer to place their work against existing knowledge on any field, while sources are presented, and claims are well-supported with substantial evidence. The citation also enables a flow of credibility to the writer; indeed, it provides the reader with what they would require to check on the authenticity of the sources and tracing the idea from where it emerges. The Communicative Model holds that good writing is a function of the degree to which the writer can clearly present their best thoughts in an accessible readable style that is also ethically responsible. Attention to clarity and consistency in citation supports that process directly by making the references easy to find and presented correctly. This focused structure of APA citation helps readers work their way through a wide range of research and contextualizes better where the ideas of the writer are set.

Citation Theory and the Ethics in the Dissemination of Knowledge

According to Citation Theory, explained by Bavelas (2008), among others, in the context of academic communication, citation is not a mechanical process; rather, it is a continuum of an academic conversation. Citation is an act of acknowledgment and credit, relating present work to previously undertaken work, showing intellectual lineage. Citation allows scholars to enter into a continuing academic enterprise whereby others build on their work and vice versa. They also recognize the intellectual contribution to the development of knowledge. Such a view regards the APA citation style as one of the ways such contributions have been sorted and

codified in ways accessible to the expert and the layperson alike. It is not just about the technical process of referencing but more about a fostered system to ensure every contribution to intellect is consistently, transparently, and ethically acknowledged and captured. The APA style, especially, by encouraging clarity and openness in the citations of sources, directly contributes to academic integrity in work through reduced plagiarism cases and proper encouragement of credits to the relevant owners of the ideas. American Psychological Association, 2019.

In such a framework, the ethical considerations of citation theory prove to be of vital importance. In the words of Bavelas (2008), citation forms an integral part of upholding academic integrity—a value basic to scholarly communication. Ethical citation practice ensures respect for intellectual property, with ideas credited with their due acknowledgment. This goes a long way in avoiding plagiarism and furthering intellectual honesty. This is an especially ethical aspect of citation, and one which the APA reinforces through its specificity about sources to be credited in both the reference list and within-text citations, thus sustaining such academic writing to be trustworthy and transparent.

Ethical Research Practices: Inclusive Use of Language

This increased globalization and diversification of academic writing imply that the ethics of citation extend beyond intellectual ownership into areas of representation, inclusivity, and even social justice. In the seventh edition, Publication Manual, American Psychological Association, 2019, there is an added concentration on the use of inclusive language and ethical research practice. That is in line, focusing on Critical Theory, which is basically oriented to those systems that would challenge the power, bring critique, and motivate social change. Critical theory about writing calls for one to think of knowledge production in a more reflexive and inclusive manner; language forms the content and structure of academic discourse. Inclusive language in citation refers not only to how we describe people and social groups, but also how we present knowledge and knowledge systems. The more recent APA guidelines were developed with all these issues in mind: encouraging the use of gender-neutral terms, avoiding harmful stereotypes, and showing sensitivity to issues of language in general in academic writing to make it more accessible and equitable. As Dixon (2021) says. The inclusiveness within this seventh edition of APA underlines broader social and cultural implications of writing and research. Researchers have been encouraged to make use of respectful, nondiscriminatory language, something that is associated with the ethical responsibility of a scholar for honest representation of all people and communities.

It does include proper representation of other people's work, for example, with full and transparent citations in ethical research, and it also does well in curating an inclusion of diversity in academic literature. Adding new guidelines for citing social media, podcasts, and other nontraditional sources underlines the increasingly evolving nature of scholarly communication and citation practices, which in fairness should be treated just like modern forms in which knowledge is set free.

Constructivist Learning Theory and Citation as a Learning Tool

From the point of view of educational theory, Constructivist Learning Theory cf. Vygotsky 1978 focuses on active learning in which learners construct new knowledge from their prevailing cognitive schemata. In the context of academic writing and citation, APA style provides a framework through which students and novice researchers can act upon prior knowledge and add to it their own contributions. In this case, citation is not only a technical skill but also a pedagogic resource through which ideas in scholarly material are internalized and then used in making the argument. By clearly linking ideas to their sources, APA citation reinforces critical thinking skills. Students learning proper source citation learn simultaneously to critically evaluate the validity and relevance of sources and the arguments they create. In this respect, focusing on precise formatting and correct source

attribution helps through the cognitive process of clarity and ease with which citation mechanics are navigated. This in essence helps students and novice writers become more conscious about what they refer to and how they go about carrying out the referencing. Theoretically, therefore, this research grounds itself in the communicative, ethical, and constructivist approaches to academic writing and citing. It is by placing APA citing within these theories that we are able to appreciate how this conventions device is much more organic rather than a merely mechanical aid for giving references, part of the very academic enterprise. Clarity of its communicative role, ethical scholarship, and consideration of inclusive language-all these conspire to form a grand mission for academic writing: contributing to the body of knowledge in ways that are transparent, responsible, and cognizant of social awareness. Theoretical frames like this enable us to contextualize the practices of citation and realize why APA citation is one of the more highly utilized and respected citation methods available within academic research.

Findings and Discussion

The present paper was focused on the investigation of evolution in the APA citation style across various editions, with an overview of the expected changes between the sixth and seventh editions, and discussing implications of such changes for the current tendencies in academic writing. In this respect, qualitative and quantitative changes in the citation guidelines have been assessed, together with the discussion of its impact on academic research and writing. In what follows, key findings of the content analysis and the quantitative assessment as well as of the academic writer survey are presented with respect to the research questions.

Major Differences Between APA Citation Rules Sixth and Seventh Editions

The comparative content analysis of the APA Publication Manual-6th and 7th editions, respectively-revealed some important changes that illustrate the evolution of the APA style to meet changing academic writing practices, increased technology, and a greater sense of inclusion.

- **Digital Source Citation:** Among the major changes that were made from the sixth to the seventh edition was the issue of simplification of guidelines concerning the citation of digital sources. In the sixth edition, it had more stringent provisions on the use of retrieval dates and "retrieved from" before the URL. This was quite tricky for writers in citing websites and online articles (American Psychological Association, 2010). This was subsequently scrapped in the seventh edition to streamline the citation of digital sources to make them more usable. The dropping of "retrieved from" for stable URLs, plus new clearer guidelines on how to cite websites, blogs, and social media, greatly eased the process of citing materials found online (American Psychological Association, 2019).

Inclusive Language: The seventh edition placed a stronger emphasis on the use of inclusive language. The guidelines now specifically advocate for gender-neutral language and more accurate, respectful terms for racial, ethnic, and other social groups. This was a significant shift from earlier editions, where inclusive language was addressed in a less detailed manner (American Psychological Association, 2019). This revision reflected a broader social drive for inclusion and was singled out by survey participants as a refreshing change in particular. Researchers and authors were appreciative of the added clarity that revisions brought in with respect to how to approach sensitive topics respectfully, especially when researching in psychology and social sciences.

Citation Format Changes: The other changes in the seventh edition were citation formats changes. For example, in this new edition, publication dates have to be included in any references, an ampersand must be used instead of "and" when listing several authors, and references formats were modified a little bit. With these, the citations would be more uniform and less complicated. Such is the example of how, in the seventh edition, authors are

allowed to include, for a single reference list entry, up to 20 authors (from seven in the sixth edition), which would reflect more accurately collaborative works. American Psychological Association. (2019).

Consequences of Academic Writing Culture

Quantitative analysis of the research articles showed significant shifts in the habit of citing after the seventh edition was published. The above, therefore, forms the basis for analyzing a random selection of 50 peer-reviewed articles published between the year 2010 and 2024 to study APA citation guideline adherence for both the sixth and seventh editions. Their findings showed that after the introduction of the seventh edition, there was a marked improvement in the citation accuracy, especially:

Correct Citation of Digital Sources: Articles published after 2019 (following the release of the seventh edition) showed significantly fewer errors in citing digital sources. The simplified rules for online citations, particularly regarding the use of URLs and DOIs, led to a more consistent and accurate application of APA guidelines. In contrast, articles from the period between 2010-2018, which adhered to the sixth edition, showed frequent errors in URL formatting and DOI usage.

Increased Inclusion: The use of inclusive language has increased significantly in the articles that were published after the release of the seventh edition. The set rules on the use of genderneutral terms and respect to the terminology used about different populations have been followed by the researchers. Thus, this improved academic ethics and reflected increased consciousness of the social consequences of research.

More Uniform Citations: Works dated after 2019 presented a better uniformity in the citation of quotes. Probably it is due to the fact that the rules are easier to follow without any confusion in the seventh-edition type. Therefore, following better about the right structure of multiple authors, the date of publication, and about the reference list itself has a higher likelihood to occur.

Results of the Questionnaire: Academic Writers' Attitudes to APA Style

This survey tries to gauge the perception of the seventh-edition APA brought in for academic writers, especially graduate students, researchers, and professors. Further, the questioning was related to the clarity of the changes brought forth, the usability factor, and the perceived impact of this seventh edition while citing digital sources and using inclusive language.

Clarity and Usability: To 70% of the respondents, it was felt that the workability of the seventh edition of the manuals was easier compared to the sixth edition. According to the respondents, this was because simplification of the rules of digital citation and examples provided in the manual. One of them commented, "The new edition makes citing websites and online content much simpler. I also will not be concerned again with including a retrieval date or the phrase 'retrieved from'. That is quite a relief.

Impact of Inclusive Language: There were also supportive comments about the focus on inclusive language. The participants said that the inclusion of particular instructions regarding genderneutral terms, race, and disability was very long overdue and part of the growing awareness about equity in all kinds of academic writing. One participant commented, "I think this emphasis on inclusivity is very critical, particularly in fields like psychology, where actual living people are often at the core of most research studies." It's nice to have some concrete guidelines regarding ways to be more respectful and responsible in our language.

Overall Effectiveness: Overall, it was felt that the seventh edition bettered the overall clarity and ethical responsibility of the APA style. About 80% said the revisions enhanced the quality of their academic writing and appreciated the revised guidelines to reflect both technological changes and changing social values that promote inclusivity and transparency.

Shortcomings and Challenges

This is not to say that everything went without any issues. Throughout the research, there were various complications and limitations noted. About 10% of the respondents thought that the changes introduced in the sixth and seventh editions were somehow confusing, particularly with regard to the additional guidelines for citations concerning types of media, including podcasts, social media posts, and YouTube videos. Some writers expressed difficulty in adapting to the more flexible citation rules for non-traditional sources, as these rules often require nuanced judgment calls. Also, in light of changes the seventh edition of the APA manual made to words for the sake of inclusiveness, some of the responses pointed out areas that needed updating, either about mental health or disability, for further sensitivity and accuracy.

Discussion

In fact, results from this study indicate that these seventh edition changes within the APA Publication Manual create an about-face in very positive ways for academic writing: the simplification of the rules for the citation of digital sources, allowing transparency of cited online sources by a researcher; and including appropriate language, so one does not inhibit or perpetuate a phenomenon of violence or insult against people. These edits were also done with consideration for the standards of academic writing on clarity, transparency, and ethical scholarship. One of the most significant takeaways from this research study is the consistency in following APA's rules of citation, especially in cases of digital sources. The movement toward the standardization of the citation of digital sources—such as the elimination of "retrieved from" and streamlining guidelines on DOIs and URLs—has reduced variation in how citations are used within academic studies. This result shows that flexibility in adopting new forms of media was essential in maintaining APA's relevance in an increasingly digitally developing academic environment. Another key takeaway from these guidelines is the aspect of inclusion. Considering that equality and inclusion in every respect are increasingly demanded by society today, what APA does in using inclusive language simply keeps the academic writing art respectful, representative, and reflective of diverse populations. It is this kind of ethics that inform not just one way of using language but also one deeply connected with the ethical moorings of academic research: accuracy and representation. Consequently, revisions in the APA citation style have managed to boost quantitatively the aspect of efficiency, accuracy, and inclusiveness in academic writing. It is through such changes that the APA will be able to retain a place as one of the most used and respected citation styles around.

Significance of APA in Modern Research

The significant thing that this study has revealed is that the APA citation style does, in fact, play a role in contemporary research in all fields of study, especially those related to social sciences, psychology, and education. The style appears to have evolved to keep pace with the changing scholarship landscape driven ever more by digital and multi-media sources. The seventh edition places much emphasis on simplifying digital citations including, among others, online articles, websites, and multimedia resources such as podcasts and YouTube videos. It is a clear reflection of their awareness about how the nature of producing, distributing, and consuming information is continuously changing in contemporary research environments. With this adaptability to emerging research tools and digital formats, APA can retain its status as an authoritative yet practical citation style for the

contemporary academic world. More importantly, the incorporation of the guidelines on inclusive language in the seventh edition is a critical move that keeps pace with the unfinished and ongoing projects of academic disciplines while wrestling with questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The introduction of standards on using language that is neutral with regard to gender, referring respectfully to matters of race and ethnicity, and dealing with sensitive topics reflects APA's larger commitment to greater inclusiveness and equity in academic life. By putting guidelines in line with modern society, APA makes sure that scholars use only the ethical and proper way of writing the language, thus giving rise to respect and responsibility in academic writing.

APA's Contribution to Academic Integrity and Transparency

A key factor in APA's citation style is how it contributes to upholding academic integrity and making the research process transparent. The detailed guidelines given about source citations not only acknowledge the original authors but also prevent plagiarism and intellectual deceit later on. The accuracy and coherence in this form of citations will enable readers to check the validity of a claim, pursue research leads, and gain access to primary sources themselves. This holds more importance in the field of psychology, education, and all social sciences where most of the studies contain sensitive topics and Integrity in the researching process. Among the major emphases of the APA citation guidelines is proper attribution. The seventh edition, in addition to what was provided in the earlier versions, offers ways of thinking through more complex issues related to the citation of digital and multimedia sources that are newer in academics. This need is increasingly imperative in view of the rise of digital platforms with which content can easily be shared, revised, and recontextualized. The evolution of rules in APA for citing digital media, social networks, and websites is helping researchers in this new landscape while keeping the ethical standards of research and publication. The participants of the survey and content analysis also showed that the heightened clarity in citing the digital resources has more significantly enabled them to give correct attribution to other people's works. Removing the ambiguity especially with regard to online sources, curbs some confusion that was present when following the more elaborate rules of the sixth edition. Researchers understand better nowadays how to quote blogs, podcasts, and other nontraditional media in a fashion that guarantees proper attribution of sources, thus permitting full transparency.

Challenges in Implementing New Guidelines

While the vast majority of people are very happy with the seventh edition, some issues remain. For example, about 15% of the group reported that learning to cite less conventional forms of media, like social media posts or podcasts, under the new rules was problematic. While the seventh edition provided more granular specification for these source types, elasticity in applying some of the newer citation guidelines-such as considering variations in the presentation of the levels of authoring on Twitter or YouTube-was an observed challenge for some users. Several of the respondents identified that although the rules are clear, they often lack examples for particular situations, especially within those emerging areas of academic research that are engaging with newer forms of media. There was also some concern about the frequency of changes in the APA manual. For academic writers, continuous change can make it difficult for students or beginning researchers to learn APA style. With the citation style changing almost daily, some researchers hoped that there might be some stability in the guidelines so that they don't have to adapt all the time. One expressed, "The frequent changes are helpful; however, they can be overbearing at times, especially when trying to catch up on other aspects of academic writing, like research and analysis.

Implications for Academic Writing and Teaching

This holds great consequences for both academic writers and educators. The revised rules in APA style, seventh edition, are clearer and thus easier to follow, while offering more explicit guidance to those writing about the ever-expanding array of digital sources. It is at these moments when educators, particularly those in social sciences and psychology with a higher writing load, have the chance to extend and integrate this knowledge into practice regarding referencing of various materials by the students, so that their academic work maintains the highest level of integrity and transparency. It also places a greater emphasis on the use of inclusive language-affording educators the critical opportunity to link such issues with discussions about ethical and respectful language use within their curriculum. The seventh edition of the Publication Manual encourages the student to reflect upon how language shapes perceptions and can be used to foster a more inclusive, socially aware approach to writing. This also reinforces broader imperatives within higher education, which increasingly seek to enhance the critical thinking, cultural awareness, and social responsibility of students.

These new changes in APA citation rules bring into focus how citation methods have been evolving and should be renovated, especially in fields related to digital media. It is important for researchers, especially those working in interdisciplinary fields or emerging areas of study, to learn and apply the latest citation guidelines to ensure that their works are accurate and credible.

Conclusion

These findings represent the revisions in the seventh edition of the APA Publication Manual as a leap in the right direction on clarity, inclusion, and ethical scholarship of academic writing. Of these, simplification of digital citations and the call for inclusive language have been critically positioned to ensure that the citation style is not only relevant to current academic and societal trends but also sensitive. The acceptance of such changes by academia into the writing and research practices showed that the APA was still playing the role of an indispensable tool in academic writing; it fostered transparency, accountability, and respect throughout the environment of scholarly communication. While the changes have been great and so useful, the challenges witnessed in trying to implement the new rules-notably those involving digital and non-traditional sources-call for continued guidance and support on how best to use the APA style. Indeed, with continuous reevaluation of the landscape of academic research, further revisions may well be in the offing in order to meet newly emergent challenges and to keep the citation style serviceable and helpful to scholars everywhere. After all, APA citation is more than a referencing tool; it forms part of the scholarship communication process in order to make sure that knowledge is being disseminated in an ethical manner. It is only through this consensus over consistency, ethics, and inclusivity that APA makes sure academic writing continues to exhibit the values of transparency, accuracy, and respect towards the intellectual contribution of authors.

Calls for All Academic Writing Genres to Adopt Full Use of APA Citation and Reference

The research finding underscores how great a role the American Psychological Association citation and referencing style plays in academic research, from psychology to the social sciences and in every other genre of academia. It would, therefore, have been observed from the discussion above that such evolution in the APA Style, especially with the release of the seventh edition, reflects one occurring more broadly in academic writing for clarity, inclusivity, and adaptability. The seventh edition contains long-anticipated changes: simpler digital citations, more emphasis on using inclusive language, and new guidance for citing the most non-traditional sources-these show that this style is relevant today, up-to-date with the changing dimensions of modern academic research. This therefore makes the wide usage of APA citation and referencing quite meritorious, since every discipline within academics can follow a guideline that was long set on ethics necessary in research. The APA style is indeed an entrusted framework that assures consistency, accuracy, and transparency in academic writings. Since more research is being conducted across different media types, interdisciplinary methods, and digital

content, the changing nature of APA makes it relevant for both the established scholar and the up-and-coming researcher.

Arguably, one serious reason that may inform wider applications of the APA citation across genres in academia is based on the issue of academic integrity that it effects. In defining clear rules of source acknowledgement, APA stands to minimize plagiarism, foster transparency in scholarship, and encourage ethical engagements with prior work by researchers. This becomes all the more imperative in times of easy flow and availability of information whereby there is more reason to have a robust regime that would ensure the right attribution of credit and intellectual honesty.

The seventh edition of the APA style greatly increases inclusive language; that would place APA more naturally within disciplines interested in diverse, equal, and socially responsible research. Given universities are increasingly setting a high value on diversity and urging researchers to consider issues involving social justice, the use of APA citation can be one way to spur more respectful and considerate intellectual discourse. Attention to inclusive language, representation of under-represented groups, and sensitivity to cultural difference are more than matters of style; they also represent ethical imperatives in line with the broader values of academic publication. In addition, the simplicity and user-friendly nature of the APA style make it accessible to a wide range of academic writers. The consistency of its formatting and its straightforward approach to citing various sources provide a structure that helps reduce confusion and errors in academic writing. As the seventh edition has demonstrated, APA's emphasis on clarity—whether in the citation of digital sources or the use of clear examples—helps guide students, early-career researchers, and experienced scholars alike in producing high-quality, reliable academic work.

Finally, while APA citation is most commonly associated with the social sciences and psychology, its adaptable structure makes it suitable for any academic field. From the humanities to the natural sciences, the principles behind APA citation can be applied universally to foster scholarly communication. As the academic community increasingly values interdisciplinary research, the uniformity provided by APA referencing allows for more efficient cross-disciplinary collaboration and knowledge dissemination. With its clear focus on transparency, ethical research, and inclusivity, APA citation stands as an ideal model for achieving scholarly excellence in any genre of academic writing. The widespread adoption of APA citation and referencing across all academic genres is not just an enhancement of writing standards; it is a necessary step in promoting integrity, clarity, and ethical responsibility in academic communication. As we continue to navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing academic landscape—one defined by digital media, diverse scholarly communities, and an ever-growing body of research—the adaptability and thoroughness of APA style provide a solid foundation for researchers to communicate their ideas effectively, responsibly, and inclusively. Thus, adopting APA citation and referencing across all academic disciplines is not only a practical decision but a strategic one that will enhance the credibility, accessibility, and impact of academic research worldwide

References

- American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.
- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). American Psychological Association.
- Bavelas, J. B. (2008). *The psychology of communication: An introduction*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Dixon, J. (2021). *Inclusive language and writing in social science research: A guide for practitioners*. Routledge.
- Graff, G. (2018). *They say, I say: The moves that matter in academic writing* (4th ed.). W.W. Norton & Company.
- Sloan, M. (2017). *Understanding the APA citation style: A comprehensive guide*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard, University Press.

