

ISSN: 1441-9285

# PSIKOmedia

JURNAL PSIKOLOGI MARANATHA

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# **PSIKOmedia**

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**JURNAL PSIKOLOGI MARANATHA**

Diterbitkan oleh Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Kristen Maranatha  
Terbit dua kali setahun, bulan September dan Februari

**Pelindung**

Rektor Universitas Kristen Maranatha

**Penanggungjawab**

Drs. R. Sanusi Soesanto, M.Psi, Psikolog

**Pimpinan Redaksi**

Meilani Rohinsa, M.Psi, Psikolog

**Wakil Pimpinan Redaksi**

Gianti Gunawan, M.Psi, Psikolog

**Sekretaris**

Vida Handayani, M.Psi, Psikolog

**Bendahara**

Maria Yuni, M.Psi, Psikolog

**Koordinator kesekretariatan**

Fundianto, S.Psi

**Naskah**

Ellen Theresia, M.Psi, Psikolog

Kayan, M.Psi, Psikolog

Eveline Sarintohe, M.Si

Efnie Indrianie, M.Psi, Psikolog

Amanda Mildred, M.Psi, Psikolog

**Layout**

Trisa Genia, S.Psi

Priska Analya, S.Psi

**Distribusi**

Ira Adelina, M.Psi, Psikolog

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Saran, Kritik dan Tulisan/ Artikel yang ingin dimuat dalam Jurnal Psikologi Maranatha dapat dialamatkan pada :

**Redaksi Jurnal Psikologi Maranatha**  
**Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Kristen Maranatha**  
**Jl. Prof.drg. Suria Sumantri, MPH no 65, Bandung. 40164**  
**Tlp: (022) 2012186 ext: 304/306**  
**Email: psikomedia.maranatha@gmail.com**

**Book Review : The Practical Researcher**

**A Student Guide to Conducting Psychological Research**

Gouw Aij Lien

*Psychology Faculty, Maranatha Christian University, Bandung.*

The book's author, Dana S. Dunn, is a Professor of Psychology who also the author, coauthor and editor of numerous psychology books. The book is written based on the author's rich and wide job experiences in teaching research methods in psychology, and as a researcher as well. Through this book he teaches the reader to conduct a theory-based research project in psychology, and guides step by step from start to finish. With his brilliant and interesting way the author illuminate necessary theoretical knowledge and practical guidance the psychology students and researchers need to conduct psychological research properly.

The Author started chapter 1 'The Why and How Psychological Research' with interesting questions such as "why do people fall in (or out) of love? Are optimists at lower risk of heart disease and early death than pessimists? Does assigning elementary schoolchildren homework improve what and how they learn?". These interesting questions concerning various human life issues will be responded in varied ways. Some people are relying on their intuition to answer such questions while some other people, chiefly psychologists will use research methods to answer the questions and determine causes and effects scientifically.

Briefly and clearly he reviews practical issues the researcher must carry out when starting a research, which including the five stages of a project (Idea, Implementation, Analysis & Interpretation, Writing and Presentation Stage). In conducting a research project the researcher can do the project alone or collaborate with others as a research team, along with the reasons need to consider in electing the options. He also provides four exercises to practice how to develop critical thinking skills, to create a realistic project timeline, to develop a peer research contract and a student-faculty research contract.

In chapter 2 the author introduce some selected approaches to conducting psychological research and gives particular examples to illustrate each approach. Briefly he describes observational research, case studies, archival research, questionnaire, experimental and applied research. Besides, he shows the distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches with their advantages and disadvantages. With inspirational way he show the reader the four sources of ideas for generating research ideas - the researcher's self, happenstance (researcher's situation, paradoxical events, and existing knowledge which are built upon previous research. He offers some advices on how to seek feedback on research ideas from peer opinion and learn to trust researcher's own opinions on psychological research, along with the exercises on keeping a notebook of research ideas , free writing to generate and refine ideas, individual and with peers brainstorming to produce ideas.

The organized and systematic ways of searching (bottom-up and top-down searches) and reading the psychological literature as the idea stage of research is clearly provided in chapter 3. The author also gives exercise to identify independent and dependent variables in psychological literature.

Writing as a first and last consideration in doing research is clearly described in chapter 4. The author provides exercise to practice writing operational definitions as one of the

most important ways to develop clarity in research writing. The format of APA-style with its structure, content and writing style paper is presented along with ways to master APA style and practical issues to improve writing. The author address ways to put ideas into writing and a sequence of steps to write drafts of APA-style paper.

Ethical considerations in the practice of research is elaborated clearly in chapter 5. Some significant exercises are provided to practice Preparing Institutional Review Boards Form writing an Informed Consent Form, Creating a Research Participant Sign-Up Sheet, and Writing a Debriefing Sheet.

The systematic and clear elaboration of implementation stage of research are presented in chapter 6 Experimental Research and chapter 7 Applied and Field Research as non-experimental approaches. These chapter teach and show clearly the distinctions among laboratory-based, applied and field researches. Some important exercises are provided to teach and practice the researchers to develop operational definitions in support of a hypothesis and theory, create a dependent measure record, write good survey questions and create a special Informed Consent form.

The author presents the analysis and interpretation stage of research through planning analysis and displaying data in chapter 8. He gives a review of descriptive and inferential statistics. He also provides some exercises to practice developing an analysis plan, creating and interpreting a correlation matrix, putting statistical results into words and creating bar graphs, histograms, and line graphs. Presenting and publishing research as presentation stage of the research is elaborated in chapter 9. The author gives some important guidance and practical tools for giving a research presentation which can be done in the classroom, symposium, conferences and to publish the research results.

In chapter 10 the author writes the closing thoughts and future directions. He recommend the researchers to love the research process, accompany with sense of responsibility as a practical researcher.

Book Description:

Title	: The Practical Researcher - A Student Guide to Conducting Psychological Research Second Edition, 2006
Author	: Dana S. Dunn
Publisher	: Wiley - Blackwell
Number of Pages	: 488 pages
ISBN	: 978-1-4051-6885-4