PSY 101: Checklist for Identifying Experimental Studies

Scan each article you select from either the web or a library database. Using the IMRD method, you must be able to view the full text of the article in order to locate the following components:

_____ 1. Statement describing the **purpose of the study** (usually found in the Introduction)

_____ 2. Clear statement of the **hypothesis** (usually found in Introduction)

_____ 3. Description of the **experimental design** (usually found in the Methods section)

_____ 4. Identification of the total **participants** in the study, i.e. how many participants; demographic info, plus any distinctive characteristics—such as twins, etc. (usually found in the Methods or Procedures section)

_____ 5. Identification of the **Experiment group and the Control group**: How do these groups differ? (usually found in Methods or Procedures section)

_____ 6. Description of how the control group is relevant to testing the hypothesis (might be found in the Introduction or Methods/Procedure)

_____ 7. Identify the **independent variable(s)** (see Methods/Procedure)

_____ 8. Identify the **dependent variable(s)** (see Methods/Procedure)

_____ 9. Identify the **operational definition** (usually in Introduction and/or Methods)

_____ 10. Identify one potential **confounding variable** (often found in the discussion, though sometimes in its own section, such as Limitations)

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Key Terms

**Control group** – a group of participants in a study who are exposed to all experimental conditions except the independent variable; hence changes in the experimental group are compared and measured against the control group.

**Correlational study** – A research method that allows a precise calculation of how strongly two factors, or variables, relate to each other.

- *Positive correlation* – a finding that two factors vary systematically in the same direction; increasing or decreasing in size together.
- *Negative correlation* – a finding that two factors vary systematically in opposite directions; one increases in size as the other decreases in size.

**Experimental group** – a group of participants in a study who are exposed to all experimental conditions, including the independent variable.

**Experimental study** - To demonstrate a cause and effect relationships between two variables; such that one variable causes a change in another variable.

**Hypothesis** – a tentative statement about the relationship between two or more variables; a testable prediction or question.

**Operational definition** – precise description of how variables in a study will be manipulated or measured.

**Variable** – any factor that can change and is capable of being observed, measured, and verified.

- *Independent variable* – purposely manipulated factor thought to produce change in an experiment; predicted or hypothesized to cause a specific behavior or event.
- *Dependent variable* – factor that is observed and measured for change in an experiment; a condition that is thought to be influenced or affected by the independent variable.
- *Confounding variable* – factor or variable other than the ones being studied that, if not controlled, could affect the outcome of an experiment.

Glossary terms adapted from:

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