

## Analyzing the Errors in Citation and Referencing in American Psychological Association (APA) Style Seventh Edition

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### Abstract

American Psychological Association (APA) has launched a new style known as the Seventh Edition. But then, Pakistani researchers and scholars often need to correct citing and referencing in APA style seventh edition. The present research divulges the most common issue which frequently detected in the academic writings of Pakistani ESL researchers and scholars. The mixed method is used in this research, and the population of the study was the scholarly writings of the English linguistics department students of a well-known private university. A sample size of thirty assignments was selected by using a random sampling technique. These assignments were used as an instrument for the purpose of assembling data. The congregated statistics were later analyzed by using the content analysis technique by reading these assignments; the same method was used by (Lodhi et al., 2019; Nuraini, 2019) to analyze data. The analyzed data was presented in tables and graphs in numerical form. The analyzed data was presented in figures and tables in numerical form. The findings of the research revealed that ESL students committed different types of errors in their academic writing. On the base of these research findings, the researchers constituted some recommendations for future researchers and scholars. This research will prove helpful for researchers and scholars in overcoming their errors in citations and references.

**Keywords:** Standard English, Writing Skills, APA Style 7th edition, Citation and Reference.

### Introduction

“Citations are the most important part of research works and very helpful in finding the sources of the cited works” (Lodhi et al., 2019, p. 26). A citation is a reference to a source; more specifically, it is an abbreviated alphanumeric expression embedded in the body of an academic work which indicates an entry in the bibliographic references section of the work for the purpose of acknowledging the relevance of the works of others to the topic of discussion at the spot where the citation appears. Generally, the combination of both the in-body citation and the bibliographic entry constitutes what is commonly thought of as a citation, while bibliographic entries by themselves are not. Citations have several vital purposes. Their uses for upholding intellectual honesty and bolstering claims are typically foregrounded in teaching materials and style guides; for instance, correct attribution of insights to previous sources is just one of these purposes. Linguistics analysis of the citation practices has indicated that they also serve critical roles in orchestrating the state of knowledge on a particular topic and identifying gaps in the existing knowledge. That should be filled or described areas where inquiries should be continued or replicated. Citations have also been recognized as a critical means by which researchers establish a stance, aligning themselves with or against subgroups

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of fellow researchers working on similar projects and staking out opportunities for creating new knowledge (Nicolaisen, 2007; Hellqvist, 2010; Masic, 2013).

### Problem Statement

Research has a prodigious status in higher-level education. Speaking and writing are productive skills, and productive skills empower students to produce language in spoken, written or form. Writing has advanced as an essential part of standard English, which is also used as a second tool of communication; in addition, it is used in exams, academic publications and books (Ahmad et al., 2023ab). In Pakistan, ESL speakers co make errors in citations and references in their scholarly works; the researchers observed this phenomenon is expected; therefore, they decided to highlight this issue by exploring different types of errors in the citations and references. To fulfil this purpose following two research questions were advanced to investigate the problem.

### Research Questions

1. Analyze the errors in citations in the academic writings of Pakistani ESL students.
2. Analyze the errors in the references of the academic writings of Pakistani ESL students.

### Literature Review

The main function of a literature review is to summarize and evaluate the writings on the theme or topic and provide a framework for thinking about the possible consequences of advanced research. It might provide a clear overview of the sources in a structural design, and its purpose is to evaluate and abridge the earlier literary works related to the present subject (Cheema et al., 2023; Kalhor et al., 2023; Maitlo et al., 2024).

### Difference Between Citation and Referencing

It is easy to understand the difference between a citation and a reference if we know what they have in common; both are associated with academic texts and are pointers to sources of information. The following table presents the difference between citations and references.

**Table 1: Difference between Citation and References**

Point of difference	Citation	Reference
Difference in purpose	The purpose of a citation is to point to additional information.	The purpose of a reference is to supply that additional information.
Difference in location	Citations appear within the main text.	References are added towards the end of the main text as a list.
Difference in amount of information	Citations give minimal information	References provide all the details.
Difference in length	Citations are short, either comprising the last names of authors and the year of publication or appearing as footnotes	References are long and often run to several lines.
Difference in Mutual referencing	Some citations lack corresponding references (for example, when the source of information is a personal email or unpublished data).	Whereas every reference must have a corresponding citation within the main text.

**Purpose:** The purpose of a citation is to point to additional information whereas the purpose of a reference is to supply that additional information.

**Location:** Citations appear within the main text whereas references are added towards the end of the main text as a list.

**Amount of Information:** Citations give minimal information whereas references provide all the details.

**Length:** It follows therefore that citations are short, either comprising the last names of authors and the year of publication or appearing as footnotes. In contrast, references are long and often run to several lines.

**Mutual Referencing:** Some citations lack corresponding references (for example, when the source of information is a personal email or unpublished data) whereas every reference must have a corresponding citation within the main text. (Harter & Kim, 1997; Homol, 2014; Muzata & Banja, 2019).

### APA Style Seventh Edition

These guidelines follow the 2020 7th edition of the American Psychological Association's Publication Manual, which is widely used in the health and social sciences. They focus on documentation, but the manual addresses issues from abbreviations to layout and should be consulted for further information. In an APA-style paper, you'll identify the author and year of each source any time you use it. That information directs readers to more detailed entries on a reference list at the paper's end (Mandernach et al., 2016).

### Citing Source

Readers cannot know from where wording and ideas comes from which is used in your sentences; unless you will not tell them, it could be your own ideas or source you just mentioned. Consequently, there is need to tell the readers from where you have taken the idea. Moreover, direct quote requires page numbers, but the rephrased words commonly do not require page numbers and can be cited narrative style in which author's name is part of sentence but in parenthetical style author's name comes after the sentence. (Uzuegbu & Onyenachi, 2015; Dawe et al., 2021; Praveen, 2023).

**Table 2: Direct Quotations**

Authors	Narrative Citation	Parenthetical Citation
One Author	Ahmad (2023) "Methodical study of the procedure is called research method" (p. 2).	"Methodical study of the procedure is called research method" (Ahmad 2023, p.2).
Two Authors	According to Ahmad and Shahid (2023) "Methodical study of the procedure is called research method" (p. 2).	"Methodical study of the procedure is called research method" (Ahmad & Shahid 2023, p.2).
Three Authors	Ahmad et al. (2023) stated "Methodical study of the procedure is called research method" (p. 2).	"Methodical study of the procedure is called research method" (Ahmad et al., 2023, p.2).
Group Author First Reference	American Psychological Association (APA; 2020) pointed that "new style is convenient" (p. 3).	"New style is convenient" (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020, P.3).
Group Author Late Reference	The APA (2020) pointed that "new style is convenient" (p. 3).	Pointed that "new style is convenient" (APA, 2020, p.3)
Author Unknown	The author "Poetic" (2020), stated that, "poetry is divine" (p.5).	One book (2020), stated that, "poetry is divine" ("Poetic", p.5).

The different types of direct quotations are presented in the above table number two, which indicates how quotes are given in APA style seventh edition differently regarding authors.

**Table 3: Narrative and Parenthetical Citations**

Authors	Narrative Citation	Parenthetical Citation
One Author	Ahmad (2023) stated that the methodical study of the procedure is called research method.	The methodical study of the procedure is called research method. (Ahmad 2023).
Two Authors	Ahmad and Shahid (2023) stated methodical study of the procedure is called research method.	The methodical study of the procedure is called research method. (Ahmad & Shahid 2023).
Three Authors	Ahmad et al. (2023) stated that methodical study of the procedure is called research method.	The methodical study of the procedure is called research method (Ahmad et al., 2023).
Group Author First Reference	American Psychological Association (APA; 2020) has pointed that new style is convenient.	The new style is convenient (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020).
Group Author Late Reference	The APA (2020) pointed that new style is convenient.	The new style is convenient (APA, 2020)
Author Unknown	In "Poetic" (2020), the author stated that poetry is divine.	Poetry is divine ("Poetic", 2020).

The different types of narrative and parenthetical citations are presented in the above table number three, which indicates how narrative and parenthetical citations are given in APA style seventh edition differently regarding authors.

**Table 4: APA Style 7th Edition References from Journal Articles and Books**

Material	Type	Example of Style
Journal article	Single author	Ruxton, C. (2016). Tea: Hydration and other health benefits. <i>Primary Health Care</i> , 26(8), 34-42. <a href="https://doi.org/10.7748/phc.2016.e1162">https://doi.org/10.7748/phc.2016.e1162</a>
Journal article	Two authors	Aspy, D. J., & Proeve, M. (2017). Mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation: Effects on connectedness to humanity and to the natural world. <i>Psychological Reports</i> , 120(1), 102-117. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294116685867">https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294116685867</a>
Journal article	Three and more authors	Wilmott, C., Fraser, E., & Lammes, S. (2018). 'I am he. I am he. Siri rules: work and play with the Apple Watch'. <i>European Journal of Cultural Studies</i> , 21(1), 78-95836-839.
Journal article	URL	Marion, T., Reese, V., & Wagner, R. F. (2018). Dermatologic features in good film characters who turn evil: The transformation. <i>Dermatology Online Journal</i> , 24(9), Article 4. <a href="https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1666h4z5">https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1666h4z5</a>
Book	Library database	Hasler, E. (2018). <i>The built environment</i> . Liverpool University Press.
Book	Web	Power, J. (2011). <i>Movement, Knowledge, emotion: Gay activism and HIV/AIDS in Australia</i> . ANU Press. <a href="https://www.doabooks.org/doab?func=search&amp;query-rid:15033">https://www.doabooks.org/doab?func=search&amp;query-rid:15033</a>
Book	Edition	Moran, A. (20017). <i>A Critical Introduction to Spot Psychology</i> . (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.) Routledge.

Book	DOI	Hail, L. (2017). <i>Perceived Exertion Laboratory Manual</i> . Springer. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-1917-8">https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-1917-8</a>
Book	Reference work	Strauss, B. (2019). <i>Dictionary of Sport Psychology: Exercise, Performance and Performing Arts</i> . Elsevier.
Book	Editors	Perry, S. M. (Ed.). (2018). <i>Diagnostic and Statistical manual of mental disorders</i> (5 <sup>th</sup> ed., text rev.). <a href="https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787">https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787</a>
Book	Multiple works by same author	Fujishin, R. (2018) <i>The Natural Speaker</i> (9 <sup>th</sup> ed.). Routledge.

The table number four above presents the references styles of the different types of articles and books.

### Previous Related Studies

Lodhi et al. (2019) in his article entitled “Linguistic analysis of the citation styles used in the theses of linguistics and literature” analyzed that the scholars have used citations correctly in their theses or not. The both qualitative and quantitative methods were used and the population of this study was the previous theses students of MPhil English department of a Pakistani government sector university. A sample size of twenty students was selected to respond the questionnaire consisted on forty-seven close ended and three open-ended questions; similarly twenty theses were selected for content analysis. These students and theses were selected equally from the English linguistics and literature. As a research instrument the researchers used questionnaire and content analysis for this study for collecting data. The collected data was analyzed through SPSS software and content reading of the theses. The results revealed that majority of the participants give no importance to the citations style and due to lack of interest and understanding the make mistakes in their works.

Nuraini (2019) analyzed errors in APA style committed by student of BS level in their theses. For this research document analysis and interview technique was used by the researcher. The population of the study was the BS level students and a sample size of ten theses and six scholars was selected for the purpose of data collection. The congregated data was analyzed by using two techniques through SPSS software and content analysis procedure. The results of this research revealed that students made different types of errors in while referring in APA style, as errors in capitalization, italic, surnames usage, full stop usage, volumes and issues numbers; moreover they used none APA style.

Santos et al. (2019) explored the causes of errors in citations and references in the academic works. The content analysis technique was used to analysis the literary works. The population of the study comprises published articles. The sample size was contained on the 729 articles published in the 147 journals related the 27 subject areas. The findings revealed that the errors in the citations and references are not new case, these are occurring from the years.

Mejorada et al. (2023) in article entitled “Students knowledge in citing sources at St. Paul University” examined the citrating sources understanding of the college level students. The researchers used quantitative descriptive research design and the population of the study was the students of St. Paul University. A sample size of the 160 participants was selected for this research. The questionnaire was contained on three parts. The first part contained on demographic information of the research participants, the second part contained on 15 questions for citations test and the third part contained on 15 questions for references test. The collected data was analyzed by using different statistical tools. The results indicated that the appropriate knowledge of citations sources will improve students’ citations and referencing skills.

Instead of these researches there is not a single research which properly deals with the issue in citations and references, the researchers and scholars are continually making errors and



mistakes in citations and references. The researchers of the present study find this research gap and tried to fill this gap through this valuable research by using following methodology.

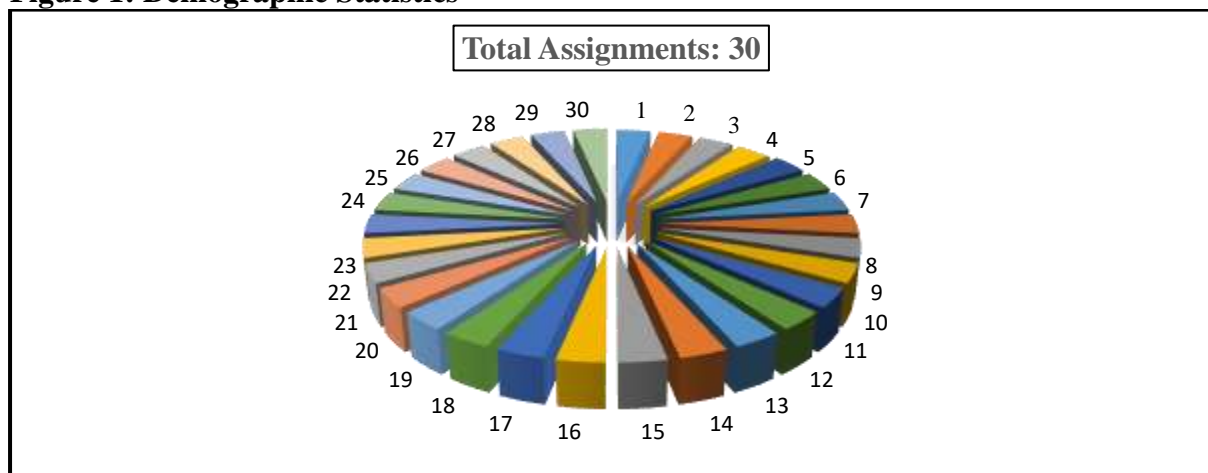
### Research Methodology

The population of the study was the assignments of the of BS English department Students of a well-known private Pakistani university for ethical concern university name was not mentioned. By using purposive sampling, a sample of 30 assignments was selected. These assignments were used as a research tool for the purpose of data collection. Lodhi et al., 2019 analyzed citations errors in twenty Mphil English theses by using content analysis method same technique is used in the present study to analyze the thirty BS English assignments; Nuraini, (2019) also analyzed ten theses of BS level students. In the present study the analyzed data was presented in tables and graphs in numerical form.

### Research Findings

This part of the present research study comprises demographic statistics of the literary works which were analyzed by using content analysis technique, citation and references are also analyzed in this part of the research study.

**Figure 1: Demographic Statistics**



The researchers gathered thirty assignments equally from the students of the BS English linguistics department to analyze the mistakes in the references and citations and references. The collected data was analyzed in the following way.

### Analysis of the Citation in the Assignments

**Table 5: Errors in the Citations in the Students Assignments**

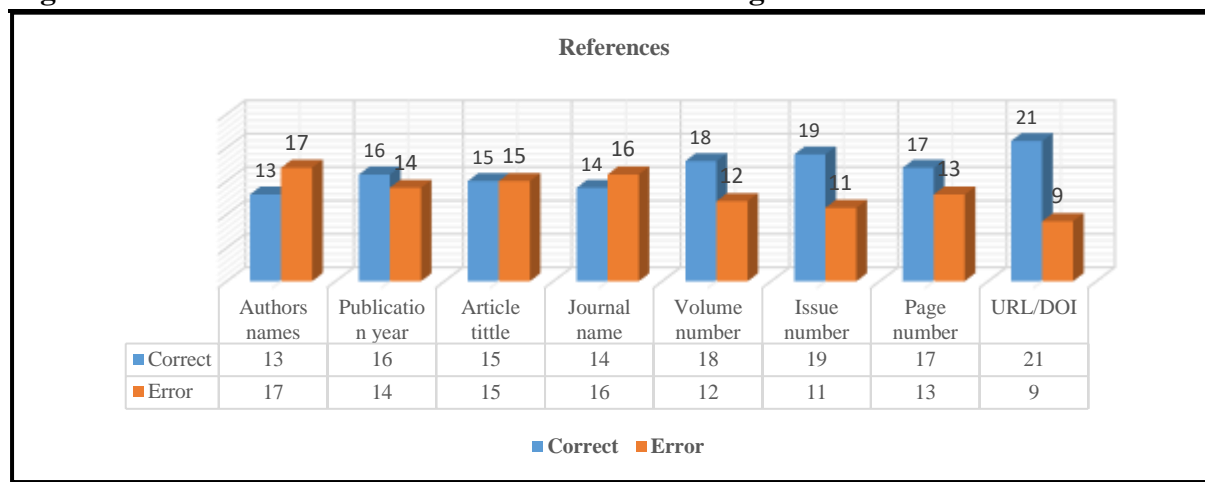
	Area	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Quotations	10	11.8%	11.8%	11.8%
	Narrative	5	5.9%	5.9%	17.6%
	Parenthetical	5	5.9%	5.9%	23.5%
	Using et al.,	10	11.8%	11.8%	35.3%
	Total	30	100%	100%	100%

The above table is presenting errors in the citations which were found in these selected thirty assignments of the BS level students. The researchers found that, the quotations errors were

found in the 10 assignments which make percent and valid percent 11.8%, and cumulative percent 11.8%. The narrative errors were found in the 5 assignments which make percent and valid percent 5.9%, and cumulative percent 17.6%. The parenthetical errors were found in the 5 assignments which make percent and valid percent 5.9%, and cumulative percent 23.5%. The errors in using et al. were found in the 5 assignments which make percent and valid percent 11.8%, and cumulative percent 35.3%.

## Analysis of the References in the Assignments

**Figure 2: Errors in the references in the Students Assignments**



The above figure is presenting the analysis of the errors which are found in these thirty assignments. In the authors names errors were found in seventeen assignments while there was no errors in thirteen assignments; while in publication year there were errors in sixteen and no error in fourteen assignments. In the article title errors were found in fifteen and also no errors were found in fifteen assignments; while journal name was written correctly in fourteen assignments and incorrect in sixteen assignments. The volume number was found incorrect in the twelve and correct in eighteen assignments; issue number errors were found in eleven assignments and no error in nineteen assignments. Errors in the page numbers were found in thirteen assignments and no error in found in seventeen assignments. In the URL and DOI links there was no error found in twenty-one assignments and errors in nine assignments.

## Findings and Discussion

The researchers gathered thirty assignments of the BS English linguistics students for the purpose of data collection. The purpose of congregating these assignments was to explore the errors in the citations and referencing. The researchers analyzed these written works and find various kinds of errors in the citations and references. In quotations and using et al., students make ten errors in each while in narrative and parenthetical citations five errors found in each part. Consequently, the research findings highlighted that scholars make considerable errors in their academic work. The author's name was incorrect in seventeen assignments and publication year in fourteen, article title in fifteen, journal name in sixteen, volume number in twelve, issue number in eleven, page numbers in thirteen, and link in nine assignments. The results of the present study match with the results of some previous research studies which are related to present research topic to some extent. As Lodhi et al. (2019) in his article entitled "Linguistic analysis of the citation styles used in the theses of linguistics and literature; Nuraini (2019) analyzed errors in APA style committed by student of BS level in their theses; Santos

et al. (2019) explored the causes of errors in citations and references in the academic works; Mejorada et al. (2023) in article entitled “Students knowledge in citing sources at St. Paul university” examined the citing sources understanding of the college level students. But the present study is conducted to highlight the errors in both citations and references in Pakistani setting which makes it valuable research for Pakistani ESL researchers and scholars.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The present research aim was to focus on the errors and mistakes in the citation and references in the academic writings of Pakistani ESL students to aware these ESL students to control and avoid these types of errors in future. For the present research researchers analyzed academic writings of the students of English linguistics department of a private university were the population of this research. Randomly, a sample size of 30 assignments was selected for data collection tool. Data was analyzed by using content analysis technique and presented in tables and graphs. The findings of the research revealed that ESL students committed different types of errors in their academic writings. On the base of these research findings the researchers constituted some recommendations for the future researchers and scholars.

- The present research will prove constructive for the scholars and researchers in the field of linguistics in overcoming their errors and mistakes in citations and referencing.
- The present research will also remind to the educators this issue which is ever ignored by them, and they will try to teach their student citations and references in best way.
- The present research will also instigate the researchers and scholars to conduct more and more researches on this topic to solve this problem which was always overlooked.

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