

Why not Reflect the Outcome of Your Study in an Academic Paper?

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Abstract

In academia, one of the common ways to reflect our ideas is in the form of an academic paper published in an academic journal related to our discipline. Many novel researchers, including the authors of this paper, have many problems developing their ideas in a way to have the chance to get published particularly in ISI cited journals. Sometimes, these problems stop them from doing their best. In view of the above, the present paper aims at outlining some crucial points in relation to writing different parts of an academic paper. In a nutshell, articles need to be organized, accurate, and clear enough to be published in top journals.

Key words: Write, Academic paper, Journal

1. Introduction

A successful publishing career means writing for a highly specific scientific audience and it takes most authors years to discover how to do this in a way that results in a high percentage of accepted papers. An early decision is whether to work alone or with colleagues. To acquire these skills you can work alone, in isolation from colleagues, and hope to learn from rejection letters and from harsh peer reviews. Or, you can build an informal team of fellow scientists who are both critical and supportive and who will read and comment on your papers.

Some people write beautifully and effortlessly while others feel like they are sweating out each word. But over time authors with both writing styles make successful contributions to science. According to Nicholson (2006), the best way to write a research paper is to read other papers. This is because the works that we produce are one brick in an ever-rising wall. Our brick will be built upon the works of others and, once published, others will build upon our work. It can be concluded from what Nicholson (2006) has put forth is that doing research and writing research papers are interactive processes.

In the same line, it should be underscored that each journal has its own specific style configuration and to be accepted by a journal you must write to its requirements, not those of another style format and not to your own personal preferences. To do this, have all information on all of the parameters required for the one journal that you have (initially) chosen.

We do not need to be novelist to report the results of a well done research. According to Summers (2001), we just need to be organized, accurate, and clear in our writing. In the same line, Summers (2001) highlighted the following four main reasons why papers are rejected by peer-reviewed journals particularly those ISI indexed: 1) the research does not contribute new knowledge to the existing one, 2) the literature review is not well-developed, 3) the methodology which is utilized lacks many flaws such as reliability issues, and 4) the writing style is not organized. In fact, the ideas are scattered.

However, in addition to what Summers put forth as the major reasons for the rejection of many papers, many non-native speakers, including the authors of the present paper, many not be able to write as the native speakers do unless they make themselves familiar as much as they can with how the native speakers write. This requires both reading a lot and writing a lot.

In view of the above, the primary and the most essential criteria for good scientific writing are accuracy and clarity. Clarity can best be achieved through good organization. It not only permits readers to read the report from beginning to end, as they would any coherent narrative, but also to scan it for a quick overview

of the study or to locate specific information easily by turning directly to the relevant section. Within that format, however, it is still helpful to work from an outline of your own. This enables you to examine the logic of the sequence, to spot important points that are omitted or misplaced, and to decide how best to divide the labor of presentation between the introduction and final discussion. Following are some essential points to remember when developing every part of a paper.

2. How to write an abstract

The abstract summarizes how you carried out your research and what you learned. Even if you do not use the structured abstract, it can serve as a guide to a concise unstructured abstract. Always remember not to go over the abstract size limit set by the journal. Moreover, the abstract should be written as clear as possible. Avoid vague structures. According to Feldman (2004), the major problem with most of the abstracts is that they are not clear. In other words, the ideas are vague. Hence, the author should always keep in mind to include concrete information in the abstract.

According to Perry et al. (2003), a rich abstract should include the following elements: 1) the abstract should start with an overall sentence about the whole topic, 2) the main problem and the purpose of the study should come next, 3) the methodology utilized should be explained in short, 4) the main findings of the study should be mentioned in one or two sentences, and 5) the implication of the findings should come at the end.

In the same line, Mclean (2001) underscored the point that nothing should be in the abstract that is not in the main text. As a matter of fact, the article should be complete without the abstract. Mclean further highlights the point that the abstract should not contain any reference.

3. How to write the introduction

A good introduction tells the reader why the paper is important in terms of the problems to be investigated, the context for the research question, what place this research question has in understanding addictions, and what is original about the endeavor. Do not simply describe the substance or behavior under study.

Authors who see this as sufficient too often feel that the problem substance or behavior itself implies what research is needed. This is almost never true. At no point should the volume of loosely related information make the reader feel lost. Avoid archaic arguments that have been resolved or that are not pertinent to your paper, even though you may have spent months researching these and you have a fascinating solution to the debate. In relation to developing a good introduction section, Bem (2003) highlighted the point that writers should not plough the unprepared reader directly into a problem or theory.

4. How to write the literature review

The literature review is a crucial portion of your paper. Many beginning researchers have problems with the scope and structure of the literature review. By studying examples of good literature reviews you can improve your understanding of current standards. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), the main purpose of the literature review is to look at the previous works regarding a specific topic again. Peer reviewers will be much more familiar with the literature than you are, and so your literature review needs to read as informed and critical, not naïve and accepting of all that is cited.

One way to improve your literature review is with a step-by-step approach. All of the relevant literature needs to establish the theory and/or hypothesis that you will examine. It is very much helpful if you outline your paper and to what background or literature reviews you need for each section. Do not forget to include all relevant literature for each of the measures that you have used. More importantly, you need to know what previous research has been done on the problem.

A good literature review does not simply summarize the previous works. In fact, in the literature review, the researcher should critically evaluate and synthesizes the previous researches (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Try to consider the following points when developing the literature review section: 1) find the relationships between what you have reviewed, 2) find the differences between the works which you have read, 3) find the gaps related to the literature review, 4) report the methodology which other researchers have used, 5) report the findings and the limitations of their findings, and 6) try to make a connection between what you have cited in your literature review section and your own work.

5. How to write the research questions

The most important point to consider in developing the research questions is that they should be as precise as possible. In other words, the research questions should reflect the main purpose of the study. Try to write the research questions as simple as possible. This helps the reader to know exactly what the research is looking for.

6. How to write the methodology

After developing the introduction and the literature review, the most important part of a paper, in our opinion, which is the methodology, should be developed carefully. In order to go through this section, one should know the research methods in such detail that she/he could replicate the study in full with another sample. One way to check the completeness of this section is to have a colleague read it and ask her/him to verify if she/he could carry out this research project wholly from the Methods section.

Try to describe how the instruments which have been utilized were verified to be reliable or/and valid. This is very important to the reviewers. If your research is experimental, you should make it clear how you controlled the variables of your research. Among other important things to be considered in the methodology section is the participants selection. Explain how you selected the participants.

If there are previously released papers using the same method then you should cite these. This may allow you to shorten the Method section if some aspect of your methods is suboptimal it is better to mention it here with the comment "see the Limitations section" and then be straightforward in the limitations section. Do not try to hide or disguise poor methods; reviewers will attack suddenly on them.

7. How to the results and discussion

Here you describe the outcome(s) from your research. Double-check that each novel finding to be discussed has already been reported here. This section especially lends itself either to over writing (excessive detail beyond what is needed for analysis, excessive weight given to non-significant results) or to under-writing (cursory attention to important aspects and variables). A mistake to avoid here is opening the Results section with a description of the sample and the analyses that are more relevant to the Methods, such as the validity of your measures.

Start your results section with the main findings. Beginning researchers, such as us, often take up too much of their paper with non-significant results; be ready to drop a result which colleagues or reviewers suggest is unimportant, even though it seems like a wondrous and magical thing to you. Describe how your specific results fit into the world of addiction science. You may address issues raised in the literature review, you may address policy issues, or you may raise new questions that are either unaddressed or rarely addressed by others.

In relation to the discussion section, it should be mentioned that you should not merely report that, for example, the results of your study are in line or against the findings of previous research. What you need to do is to find the contributions of your findings to the field. You need to explain why your research brought about new or different results.

8. How to write the conclusion

Conclusion and the abstract are not the same. Do not copy and paste what you have included in the abstract to the conclusion. To write a good conclusion you need to start with a general sentence related to your study. Then, mention the problem and the purpose of your research. Following that you need to report on the results in short. In fact, the most important finding should be mentioned in the conclusion. Another important thing which should appear in the conclusion section is the new gap that the author finds out to be filled by another research.

9. Conclusion

When your first addiction paper is published you will have made a contribution to the addiction sciences and to the public arena where the dialectics between what is, what could be, and what will be, are in

struggle. Once our paper is published, others will appreciate it and will use our knowledge to create new knowledge.

In a nutshell, we suggest that you contact your chosen journal with a draft title and abstract, ask if your paper is of interest and relevant to the journal's mandate, and ask any awkward questions before you submit your paper. This saves much of your time before you spend days writing a paper to a specific format when that journal is unlikely to accept it. If the answer is favorable, you are ready to start writing. If the response is unfavorable, look for another journal.

Finally, the authors of the present paper should declare that they themselves have lots of problems developing a good research paper to target an ISI cited journal. However, this has not stopped them from doing their best to share their limited knowledge with other researcher.

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