



HOW TO WRITE A SCHOLARLY ARTICLE THAT SATISFIES REFEREES EXPECTATIONS FOR PUBLICATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF GLOBAL JOURNAL SERIES

AJAKE UCHENNA EGODI
Email: ucheajake@gmail.com

(Received 7 November 2024; Revision Accepted 5 December 2024)

ABSTRACT

Publishing scholarly articles in reputable journals is a very crucial milestone in academic career. However, navigating the peer-review process can be very difficult and frustrating for early – career researchers. When referees' expectations for publications are unclear the risk of rejection of articles will be very high. Therefore, to increase scholarly articles that satisfy referees expectations for publication, requires careful planning, research and attention to details. Hence, this paper seeks to delve into the following areas: Pre-writing stage, writing stage, literature review, methodology, results conclusion and recommendation.

KEYWORD: Scholarly, Publications, Referees, Expectation, Global Journal

INTRODUCTION

Writing a scholarly article for acceptance in a journal requires careful planning, research and attention to details. The seeds for many rejections are planted at the inception of the project, in form of topics that no matter how well executed will not sufficiently appeal to reviewers and readers. Likewise, many manuscripts ultimately earn revise and resubmits as a result of topic choices that are not clear. (Colquitt and George 2011), (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The stages of writing a scholarly article include the following;

Pre-Writing stage

1. Choose a topic: Select a specific, original topic in your field of study. The topic selected must be comprehensive, measurable and have the potency of yielding subunits. The topic must be on topical issues that has the ability to solve fresh problems.
2. Conduct literature review: Read and analyze existing research articles on your topic of interest.
3. Define research questions: Formulate a clear research questions and hypotheses.
4. Develop a research plan: Outline your methodology, sample size and data analysis.

Writing Stage

1. **Introduction:** Introduce the topic and context by providing a background information about the topic. Writing an effective introduction for scholarly article requires careful consideration of several key elements. There is need to clearly articulate the problem(s) that prompted the research by highlighting the dimensions of the problems. You must be able to explain your interest in the problem.

The researcher's ability to show how serious the problem is (i.e. the consequences of the problem). Highlight the steps previously taken to solve these problems and yet the problem still exists in an alarming rate will give your reader the need for the article.

Articulating the problem in the introduction involves clearly stating the research issue, its significance, and relevance. This problem articulation can be done systematically in the following ways.

- ❖ Articulate the direction of your study – What the researcher is out to do. Is he or she to describe, determine the relationship, influence or effect?
- ❖ Ability to explain clearly the independent variable (s) where applicable

Ajake Uchenna Egodi, Institute of Education University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

❖ Justification (rationale) for associating the independent with the dependent variables (s) where applicable.

The following anatomy of topic will capture reviewers' interest

1. **Significance:** (Taking on grand challenges) you have to identify a topic that confronts a "grand challenge". Writing a grand challenge in an article refers to addressing a complex significant, and impactful issue in your field of study. By writing a grand challenge topic, you will contribute to meaningful research, foster collaboration and drive positive change. Articles with grand challenges should consist of the following;

(I). **Complex:** Multifaceted problems requiring interdisciplinary approaches. This may require collaborations with experts in the field of study.

(II). **Significant:** Addressing critical societal needs, impacting many lives

(III). **Impactful:** Potential for substantial positive change.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GRAND CHALLENGE TOPIC:

1. **Ambitious scope:** This means your topic should be able to address multiple aspect of a problem by exploring each aspect thoroughly and also tracking intricate relationships and challenges. It should also employ innovative methodologies and give room for collaboration across disciplines. It must also contribute significantly to the society.

2. **Novelty:** (Changing the conversation). Your topic should be able to change the trajectory of conversation that is ongoing in literature or will it just add to the momentum created by existing voices. A novel topic will cause heads to turn to a new direction. This can be created by adding new vocabulary to the conversation, in form of new ideas or constructs and sometimes, it could result from new insight not articulated by prior voices.

3. **Curiosity** (catching and holding attention). Topics should catch and hold a reader's attention. Topics are interesting when their positions counter a reader's taken-for-granted assumptions. For example, a study focused on showing a seemingly good phenomenon to be bad would arouse curiosity because it challenges the reader's initial expectations. Alvesson and Karreman (2007) argued that interesting research topics flow out of "breakdown". Surprising findings in one's own data or the extant literature that cannot be explained by methodological issues or existing explanations.

4. **Scope** (Casting a wider net): Even the best topic ideas can be undermined if the resulting study is too small. Scope here is the degree to which the landscape involved in a topic is adequately sampled, in terms of relevant construct, mechanism and perspectives. Studies cannot tackle grand challenges if they are not ambitious in scope and casting a narrow net limit, the investigation of the relevant mysteries or gaps in the literature.

5. **Actionability** (in sights for practice): Topic chosen for any research should be actionable. It should offer insight for policy or organization practice. Other areas of consideration include identification of theories applicable to concept explanation or conceptual frame work.

You must be able to provide theories that provide support for relationship postulated. Provide or identify the postulator of the theory and the year.

Clearly state the main thrust of the theory and how this theory apply to the variables of the article.

To identify theories suitable for a given article the following steps may help

Step 1: 1. Clarify the article research questions or objectives

2. Identify key concepts and variables

Step 2: Conduct literature review. This can be done by: - searching various data bases and journals

❖ Analyze existing research on the topic.

❖ Note the theoretical frameworks and concepts used.

Step 3: Identify relevant theories

1. Look for theories that:

❖ explains the research phenomenon

❖ align with the research question

❖ get theories that are relevant to the study context

Common theories in disciplines like psychology; Social learning theory by Bandura, Cognitive theory by Jean Piaget

Sociology: - Structural functionalism conflict theory, labelling theory etc. Every discipline has its theories.

Purpose/objective, Research questions/Hypotheses: The ability to clearly and meaningfully state the purpose of the study is very crucial in any article. A well-crafted purpose statement should

1. Clearly define the research question or the objective.

2. Must specify the scope and focus

3. Should be concise, specific and unambiguous

4. Provide context and relevance

5. Indicate the expected outcome or contribution.

Characteristics of a good purpose statement. This includes the following.

1. Specificity

2. Clarity

3. Relevance

4. Originality

5. Feasibility

6. Alignment with research questions

1. **Specificity:** This refers to the clarity and precision with which a purpose, research questions or hypothesis is stated.

This must clearly define the research objective.

❖ Identify key variables and concepts

❖ Specify the population or context

❖ Avoid ambiguity and vagueness

❖ Provide a clear direction for the research

The purpose, research questions and hypotheses must have the following characteristics

1. The language must be clear
2. Definition precise
3. Well define scope
4. Unambiguous objectives
5. Measurable outcome

Benefits of Specificity

❖ It helps the researcher to focus on the area identified

- ❖ Enhance clarity and understanding
- ❖ Facilitate literature review
- ❖ Guides methodology and design
- ❖ Increase validity and reliability

2. Clarity of purpose: Clearly defining the research objective, scope and expected outcome is very crucial. When the purpose, research questions and hypothesis are clearly stated. The following will be achieved:

- a) It guides the research design
- b) It enhances literature review
- c) Focuses on proper data collections
- d) Facilitates analysis and interpretations
- e) Increases validity and reliability

3. Relevance: This refers to the degree to which a research study question or hypothesis is connected to the border field of study, real world problems or societal needs. For purpose, research questions or hypothesis to be relevant, it must have the following characteristics.

- a) Alignment with current research trends.
- b) Connection to practical problem or application
- c) Contribution to existing knowledge
- d) Potential impact on policy, practice or society
- e) Timeliness and currency

Types of relevance

1. Theoretical relevance: Contributes to advancing theory or conceptual framework
2. Practical relevance: Does it address real world problems or applications?
3. Social relevance: Does it examine social issues, inequalities, or concerns.
4. Policy relevance: Does it inform decision making or policy development.
5. Clinical relevance: Does it improve healthcare practices or patient outcomes. (Yin, 2018)

Importance

1. Balance research impact
2. Increases funding potentials
3. Fosters collaboration and inter-disciplinary research
4. Improve research translation and dissemination
5. Support evidence-based decision making.

4. Originality: This refers to the uniqueness and novelty of study, questions or hypothesis. The following are

Characteristics of originality

- ❖ Novelty i.e. new and unprecedented ideas
- ❖ Innovation: Challenges existing knowledge
- ❖ Creativity: Unique combinations of concepts
- ❖ Distinctiveness: clearly differentiated from existing research.
- ❖ Significance addresses important gaps or needs.

5. Feasibility: According to Locke, et al., (2014), this refers to the punctuality and potential for success of research study, project or idea. It involves evaluating resource, time and expertise required to complete the project.

Characteristics of feasibility

- ❖ Resources availability (funding, personnel, equipment)
- ❖ Time constrains (deadline, timelines).
- ❖ Accessibility (data, participate locations)
- ❖ Risk assessment (potential obstacles, mitigation strategies)
- ❖ Scalability (potential for expansion or replication)
- ❖ Stakeholder support.

6. Alignment with research questions:

a) Significance of the study

- ❖ Ability to reason out the contributions the study will add to knowledge.
- ❖ Ability to identify those who will benefit from the contributions the study will add to knowledge or for each group or establishment, what they stand to gain.

Assumptions

Ability to reason out what are taken for granted to be truth about the research conditions, without which the postulations cannot be verified.

Scope

Ability to explain how the work is delimited in point of view of location

Ability to explain how the work is delimited in point of view of the verified

Ability to provide rationale for how the work is limited

Limitations

Ability to highlight the difficulties encountered in the course of the study, which could not be surmounted

Ability to explain how the limitations highlight could affect findings obtained

b) Literature Review

Once you are able to identify problems, purpose, research questions and hypothesis, it will guide proper writing of literature review.

Steps to guide you

Step 1. Define your scope

Step 2. Conduct thorough search

- ❖ Through use of data bases and search engines.

- ❖ consider gray literature

Step 3. Evaluate and select sources

- ❖ assess source credibility and reliability
- ❖ consider publication dates, author expertise and methodology
- ❖ select diverse perspective and studies

Step 4. Organize and synthesize

- ❖ develop and outline or conceptual framework
- ❖ group source by themes, methodology or theory
- ❖ Identify patterns, gaps and conflicts.

Step 5. Write the literature review

- ❖ introduce the topic and provide context
- ❖ clearly summarize and synthesize sources
- ❖ analyze and interpret findings
- ❖ identify limitations and gaps
- ❖ conclude with implications and future research directions

Tips for Writing a Good Literature

1. Use clear and concise language
2. Employ proper citations and references
3. Avoid plagiarism
4. Use tables, figures and diagrams to virtualize data
5. Use systematic review method.

Common Literature Review mistakes

1. Lack of focus and clarity
2. Insufficient depth and breadth
3. Failure to synthesize sources
4. Inadequate critique of sources
5. Plagiarism

c) Methodology**The methodology writing involves the following;**

1. **Research design.** There are different research designs:

- ❖ Experimental, quasi experimental survey, correctional design etc.

2. Sampling strategy

- ❖ Population
- ❖ Sample size
- ❖ Sampling techniques (stratified, simple random etc.)

3. Data collection

- ❖ Instrument (survey, interview, observation, use of questionnaire
- ❖ Procedures (data collection timeline, protocols, etc.)

4. Data analysis

- ❖ statistical methods (descriptive, inferential statistics)
- ❖ software used (SPSS)

d) Result**1. Descriptive statistics**

- ❖ mean, median, mode
- ❖ Standard deviation, variances
- ❖ Frequencies, percentages

2. Inferential statistics

- ❖ Hypothesis testing (t-test, ANOVA etc.)
- ❖ Confidence intervals
- ❖ Regression analysis

3. Data Visualization

- ❖ Tables
- ❖ Figures (Charts, graphs, etc.)

e) Findings**1. Summary of key Results**

- ❖ main findings
- ❖ supporting evidence

2. Interpretation of results

- ❖ implications
- ❖ limitation

3. Comparison to Existing literature

- ❖ consistencies
- ❖ inconsistencies

4. Conclusion

- ❖ summary of main findings
- ❖ recommendations for future research

Abstract Writing

1. Introduction/background (1-2 sentence)
2. Research questions / objective
3. Methodology
4. Result (2-3 sentences)
5. Conclusion/implication (1-2 sentences)

CONCLUSION

For an article to be suitable for publication in a reputable journal, there is need to clearly identify the problem that prompted the research. The research question and the objective must be clearly defined and thorough literature reviewed, with rigorous methodology, detailed description of the research design, sampling techniques and statistical tools employed. The result of the findings must be clearly presented and adequately interpreted with clear implications. Also, familiarize yourself with target journal, adhere to submission guidelines and ensure formatting consistency. Expect constructive feedback from the peer review and ensure that you address reviewer's comments thoroughly. Revise and resubmit promptly. Ensure originality and plagiarism-free work. Before the article is submitted, review manuscript critically and employ professional editing. Also acknowledge reviewers time and expertise by being respectful, open minded and avoid defensive responses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Clearly define your research questions which must be specific, measurable, achievable relevant and time-bound.
2. Conduct a thorough literature review. Review relevant studies and theories to back up your study and identify gaps in current knowledge.
3. Develop detailed outline organize your ideas and structure your article with an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion.
4. Use clear and concise language
5. Use proper citation and referencing. Use consistent citation style (eg APA, MLA, Chicago) to credit sources and avoid plagiarism

6. Organize your articles with headings and sub headings to guide the reader.
7. Do a thorough editing and revision where necessary
8. Get feed back from peers. Share your article with colleagues or peers to get feedback and suggestions for improvement
9. Adhere strictly to journal specific guideline in terms of manuscript structure, style and formatting
10. Ensure that manuscript meets the required word count, use precise language.
11. If article is peer-reviewed respond to reviewer's comments and revise your article accordingly.

REFERENCES

- Alvesson, M., and Karreman, D., 2007. Constructing mys-tery: Empirical matters in theory development. *Academy of Management Review*, 32:1265-1281.
- American Psychological Association, 2020. *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Cals, J.W., and Kotz, D., 2013. Effective writing of abstracts. *European Journal of General Practice*, 19(3), 155-157
- Cohen L, Manon, I, and Marrison K., 2007. *Research methods in education. USA and Canada*, 270 Madison Avenue, New York: NY
- Colquitt, J.A., and George, G., 2011. Publishing in AMJ-Part1: topic choice. *Academy of management journal*, 54(3), 432-435
- Day, R.A., and Gastle, B., 2016. *How to write and publish a scientific paper* (8th ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood.
- Galbraith, D., 1999. Writing as a process. In M. Torrance and Galbraith D (Eds). *Knowing what to write: conceptual process in text production* (pp.139-159). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University
- Harrison, F and Mitchell, S., 2018. Systematic review of literature. *Journal of Research Design and Methodology*,6(1),1-12
- Hartley, J., 2018. How to write an abstract. *Journal of technical writing and communication*, 48(3), 257- 265.
- Koller, M and Bussmann, J., 2020. Conducting systematic literature reviews. *International Journal of Research and Methods in Education*,43(1),1-15.
- Locke, L. F., Silverman, S. J. and Spirduso, W. W., 2014. *Reading and understanding research* sage publication. Doi. 104135/9781483329295
- Vetter, W. J., 2013. Grand challenges: A frame work for innovation. *Journal of engineering education*, 102 (2), 151-165.
- Webster, J., and Watson, R., 2018. The role of systematic reviews in shaping healthcare policy. *Journal of Evaluation in clinical practice*, 24(5),1046-1053.
- Yin, R.K., 2018. *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage publications.