Description

The aim of every author is to see their work published. Publishing is a means of disseminating information; sharing ideas, discoveries, and perspectives to a broader audience. It lends prestige and opens doors to additional funds and further research.

Most reputed journals are peer reviewed. In this process, only 1% to 10% of all manuscripts submitted to a journal are accepted outright. The rest of them suffer one of the following fate:

- **Accept with minor revision:** This is when your manuscript is scientifically sound and well written with only a few revisions required to correct language and content.
- **Accept with major revision:** This is when your manuscript is conditionally accepted provided the major changes in content or organization are made.
- **Reject but invite to re-submit:** This is the outcome when there is usually a problem with the result or methodology of your study. You may also receive this outcome if the manuscript suffers from serious writing deficiencies. Members of the peer review board take extra time to help authors if they believe that the rejected material was of value, scientifically interesting, and appropriate to the journal. A re-submission will require further refereeing. However, note that the manuscript may still get rejected.
- **Outright rejection**: The rate of outright rejection varies from journal to journal —30% to 90% (very specific or high impact). Some common reasons for outright rejection are
    - The submitted manuscript is not within the scope of the journal
    - The submission is deemed unethical
    - The science is fatally flawed
    - The relevance is unclear

Usually, the author should revise the manuscript and look for another journal to submit to.

For non-native authors in particular, writing deficiencies contribute significantly to the dismissal/rejection of manuscripts (point 3). How you write your manuscript affects the organization,

presentation, and flow of ideas in the manuscript. Smaller problems like wordiness, paragraph transition, poor syntax and grammar, wrong words, etc. are usually not reasons for rejection as they can be easily rectified by professional editors.

We have developed a list of frequent errors identified in manuscripts that lead to rejection. Note that these errors are described for each general section of a manuscript and assume that the research design has been appropriately chosen and implemented.

1. Misleading Titles

A misleading title that does not set the limits of a study is a serious writing error. For example, a basic investigation using an animal model should mention in its title that the study is an animal study. Else, it may be misleading to readers scanning the table of contents of the journal.

2. Inaccurate Abstract

Abstracts are sometimes presented several months before the paper is written. After the paper is written, the abstract should be checked and updated with more recently acquired data. That is, make sure that the results and conclusion in the abstract are the same as the paper.

3. Incomplete Introduction

As illustrated in our previous posts, an introduction must contain the study question, hypothesis, and study objectives. If the above information is not specified and the importance of the study is not shown, then it is considered as a major writing deficiency.

4. Careless Methods

In order to avoid writing, authors report previously published methods that are similar to the current study. That is, the author simply reuses the methods section from paper to paper. Reproducing such material exactly is self plagiarism. Further, the methods need to be updated to reflect the current research project. It is disconcerting if some results do not relate to or could not possibly be obtained by the described methods.

5. Omitted Results

Errors while writing the results are quite a common occurrence. In order to adhere to the word limit, some information is often left out, either intentionally, without justification, or unintentionally. For example, not all study subjects are accounted for or names of statistical tests are not provided for specific analyses.

6. Illogical Discussion

As discussed in an earlier post, it is important that the Discussion follows a very logical order. Common

errors while writing the Discussion are:

- The flow of ideas is disconnected and not well supported
- The content is too expansive and wanders from the results
- The presentation is biased, and omits key findings from other investigators
- Key results are poorly explained
- Possible implications/the study's importance are overstated
- The study's limitations are not described

In part 2 and part 3 in this series, we will discuss other easily avoidable reasons for rejection as well as steps for the author to follow when his manuscript does not get accepted.

Category

1. Publishing Research
2. Submitting Manuscripts

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Author
admin