
A Review of Reasons for Rejection of Manuscripts

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Abstract

Rejection of submitted Paper is normal at high profile journals. Rejection is part of academic life (Venketasubramanian, N. and Hennerici, M., 2013). Publications in the top journals are critical for career advancement and for the advancement of science. Journals are the custodians of scientific endeavor and advancement. They aim to publish sound research with enduring conclusions that will stand careful scrutiny and validation (Emad M. El-Omar, 2014). A journal is an academic or scholarly publication of research papers /articles written by researchers, professors and other experts in a specialized discipline or field of study.

Keywords: Publication of research Papers, Rejection of Manuscripts

Introduction

Most importantly, academic publishing is the primary vehicle for the advancement of scientific knowledge (Ligthelm and Koekemoer, 2009). Furthermore, scientific publication can serve as documentation of work performed, fostering exchange (feedback, discussion and debate) and sustainment of support and competitive funding (Lüttge,U. 2011).

Many Manuscripts submitted to the journals of different disciplines are rejected due to various reasons, depending on the appropriateness of manuscripts. The reasons for rejecting manuscripts were found to be closely linked with the authors' ways of reporting their research outputs. Every journal has its own aims, objectives, style and norms for publication of papers and keeps up its reputation and standards. The journal will not accept papers that lie outside its subject area or that are submitted in a style or format that does not suit to the particular journal.

Overview of Reasons for Rejection of Manuscripts

Almost all scholars have had their work rejected at one point or another—between 85–90% of prominent authors admit to having their work rejected (Gans and Shepherd, 1994). Rejection of

submitted Paper is normal at high profile journals. Rejection is part of academic life (Venketasubramanian, N. and Hennerici, M., 2013).

Generally speaking, rejection of manuscripts submitted to high profile journals is common in the field of research publication. Many studies and investigations have been conducted on the reasons for rejection of research work or articles submitted to the good / high impact factor journals of different disciplines. The studies and investigations have given an account of various reasons for rejection of research work/papers relating to mismatch of format and subject area of the journal, lack of originality or significance, poor study design, inadequate description of the methods, lack of focus on the theme of the paper, inappropriate/inadequate literature review, overstating the implications of the results, poor academic writing skills and lack of command over the knowledge of English language.

In addition, space limitation is another reason not to publish some of the articles written with good standards and qualities fit to the journals' criteria. Straub, D. (2009) says, "The simplistic and often-offered explanation for this is that, even assuming the quality is present, the top journals do not have the space to publish all of these articles. Therefore, the gatekeepers restrict the pipeline to correspond to the space limitations."

Some Common Reasons for Rejection

Here are some Technical reasons for rejection:

- Incomplete data such as too small a sample size or missing or poor controls
- Poor analysis such as using inappropriate statistical tests or a lack of statistics altogether
- Inappropriate methodology for answering your hypothesis or using old methodology that has been surpassed by newer, more powerful methods that provide more robust results
- Weak research motive where your hypothesis is not clear or scientifically valid, or your data does not answer the question posed
- Inaccurate conclusions on assumptions that are not supported by your data

Editorial reasons for rejection:

- Out of scope for the journal

- Not enough of an advance or of enough impact for the journal
- Research ethics ignored such as consent from patients or approval from an ethics committee for animal research
- Lack of proper structure or not following journal formatting requirements
- Lack of the necessary detail for readers to fully understand and repeat the authors' analysis and experiments
- Lack of up-to-date references or references containing a high proportion of self-citations
- Has poor language quality such that it cannot be understood by readers
- Difficult to follow logic or poorly presented data.

In the manuscripts, Bartol (1983, cited in Eichorn & VandenBos, 1985) identified chief problems as the following:

- inadequate review of the literature
- inappropriate citations
- unclear introduction
- ambiguous research questions
- inadequately described sample
- insufficient methodology
- incompletely described measures
- unclear statistical analysis
- inappropriate statistical techniques
- poor conceptualization of discussion
- discussion that goes beyond the data
- poor writing style
- excessive length

Violation of the Journals' Protocol is another Reason

Violation of the Journals' Protocol is another reason for rejection of manuscripts. Almost all the journals have their own protocol or a set of rules and principles for publication of their issues. Each journal has its own set of writing guidelines which includes referencing style, font, font size, margin, space and other such details. Not following the writing standard set by a journal is often the most common reason for rejection of papers among early-career researchers.

Criteria/Standards of Impact Factor Journals

Publications in the top journals are critical for career advancement and for the advancement of science. Yet having papers accepted at the major journals in the field is a significant hurdle, one that cannot be enjoined by mere words of encouragement or exhortations to “try again” or “try harder” (Straub, D., 2009). Journals are the custodians of scientific endeavor and advancement. They aim to publish sound research with enduring conclusions that will stand careful scrutiny and validation (Emad M. El-Omar, 2014). A journal is an academic or scholarly publication of research papers /articles written by researchers, professors and other experts in a specialized discipline or field of study. Journals are like newspapers and magazines, but they intend for an academic or technical audience, not general readers. Journals are also called periodicals published on a regular basis such as annually, half-yearly, monthly, quarterly, etc.

According to Wellington and Torgerson (2005), there are five categories that relate to high quality, scholarly writing. First, a journal should be refereed. Second, a journal should have a respected editorial board accompanied by respected actions and policies. Third, the reputations of the authors should be well known. Fourth, the content of the journal should be high quality. Finally, the users of the journal should coincide with a high readership in higher education.

To publish their research articles or manuscripts, authors and researchers have to select a journal first by knowing its quality and standards. It is a challenging task to select a journal of high profile or good impact factor. Eugene Garfield, the founder of Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), proposed a tool to evaluate the journals' impact within a particular discipline both quantitatively and qualitatively in the year 1955. Finally, Journal Impact Factor (JIF) was indexed in 1975 for analyzing the journal's quality.

The impact factor of a journal is measured by calculating the average number of citations of the previously published articles in a particular journal. Commonly two elements regulate the value of the impact factor of a journal. The First one comprises of journal's discipline, the type of journal and articles published. The journal impact varies with the quantity of citations in different journals and the type of papers. The second one constitutes of size of the journal, or the quantity of papers published in the journal within a period of time. The journal's influence depends on the journal's impact factor.

Aims and Objectives of the scholarly Journals

The aims, objectives and criteria of a journal can attract the authors and research scholars of a particular discipline to get their research work published. Every journal has its own aims, objectives, style and norms for publication of papers and keeps up with its reputation and standards. The journal will not accept papers that lie outside its subject area or that are submitted in a style or format that does not suit to the particular journal. The journal aims to follow international benchmarks in papers selection, refereeing, editing, proofing and production as per the latest methodology and standards. Its International Advisory Board provides policy guidelines for publications in the journal.

Journal's Editorial Board and Peer Review System

Peer review is now a universally recognised procedure for evaluating academic contributions and controlling for quality (Flowerdew, J. 2013). For any research publication, the peer review process plays an important role to evaluate the quality and potential contribution of the manuscript. The editorial board or advisory board is a team of experts in the journal's field or subject area. Usually, after a manuscript is submitted to a journal, the editorial board of the journal screens the manuscript. The editorial board initially looks into the submitted manuscripts whether the articles meet the criteria of the journal or not. The articles that fulfill the journal's criteria and standards are sent for peer-review process. The comments of peer reviewers help the editorial board decide the articles to be acceptable or rejection. Submitted manuscripts should be the original works of the authors. In The Peer Review System the Submitted manuscripts are strictly checked using anti-plagiarism software in order to avoid duplication of the research

work. Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own ([Oxford Dictionaries](#)).

External Peer Review

Peer review is now a universally recognised procedure for evaluating academic contributions and controlling for quality. It is also used for academic hiring, contract renewal, tenure, and promotion purposes (Flowerdew, J.2013). According to Emad M. El-Omar (2014), the percentage of manuscripts selected for this pathway varies from journal to journal but certainly the higher-impact journals will only send out the best papers for external peer review. After the external peer review, the available decisions include rejection, major revisions, or minor revision and acceptance. Acceptance without any changes is extremely rare. Even the best written papers still have some minor flaws. Reasons for rejection after peer review include the following:

- Flaws in design/methods
- Lack of novelty (as highlighted by expert reviewers who may be aware of similar papers that are in press or have just been published)
- Lack of a clear message
- Small effect/incremental
- Minor points that do not help
- The study's rationale is poorly explained
- The study has confusing charts
- The figure or table legends are inadequate
- The numbers do not match and the discrepancy is not explained

Characteristics of Manuscript for a high impact Journal

There are some common Characteristics of Manuscripts/Research Papers which the authors should follow in writing their papers. The following are general features of the Manuscripts found in almost all the papers of different disciplines:

Title, Abstract and Keyword: The title is the first window for readers to look at your work. A good title should be concise, convey the main topics of the research, and highlight the importance of the research findings (Emad M. El-Omar, 2014). An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the content of the article; it allows readers to survey the contents of an article quickly, and, like a title, it enables abstracting and information services to index and retrieve articles. In general, there are four main types of abstracts (Publication manual of the American Psychological Association 2002): (1) an abstract of a report of an empirical study, (2) an abstract for a review or theoretical article, (3) an abstract for a methodological paper and (4) an abstract for a case study. Keywords should indicate the specific field and content of the manuscript.

Introduction: this section starts with a general background of the topic. In introducing the research concern, the writer should provide a clear rationale for why the problem deserves new research, placing the study in the context of current knowledge and prior theoretical and empirical work on the topic. Swales and Feak (2004) identified four cornerstones of the introduction in a research paper, advising authors to establish current knowledge of the field; to summarize previous research, providing the wider context and background and the importance of the current study; to set the stage for the present research, indicating gaps in knowledge and presenting the research question; and to introduce present research, stating its purpose and outlining its design (Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2010).

Literature Review: Literature review is a basis for research in almost all the academic area. A literature review is both a summary and explanation of the complete and current state of knowledge on a limited topic. Literature Review is a summary of key sources or survey of books, scholarly articles, and other related sources to a particular topic / area of research. It is helpful in understanding the research problem being studied; describing the relationship of each work to the others under consideration; Identifying new ways to interpret prior research and to prevent duplication of effort; and revealing any gaps that exist in the literature.

Method/Methodology: Research methods are the tools, techniques or processes used in the research. Methodology is the study of how research is done, and how knowledge is gained. Methodology therefore explains why certain methods or tools used in research. For one's

successful research findings, one has to see whether the selected method of analysis is sufficiently rigorous and appropriate to the research question/problem, and the descriptions of the participants and setting, materials, and procedure (data collection and analysis) be clear and complete.

Results and discussion: Results section should include a summary of the collected data and analyses, which follows from the analytic plan. All results should be described, including unexpected findings. Authors should include both descriptive statistics and tests of significance. In the Discussion section, the writer evaluates and interprets the findings. This section should begin with a statement of support or nonsupport for the original hypotheses in light of the findings. In interpreting the results, authors consider sources of bias and other threats to internal validity, imprecision of measures, overall number of tests or overlap among tests, effect sizes, and other weaknesses of the study (APA, 2010, p. 35).

Conclusion: It is a summary of the main topics covered or a re-statement of the research problem, but a synthesis of key points. It also helps the reader understand why the research should matter to them after they have finished reading the paper.

References: References are citations and sources that consulted and obtained information from while writing the research paper. Citations show the readers from where the material obtained, providing a means of critiquing the study, and offering the opportunity to obtain additional information about the research problem under investigation. The act of citing sources is also a defense against allegations of plagiarism.

Good Qualities of a Research Paper

Journal publication is one major vehicle for disseminating such information (La Forge & Coelho, 1998). Top journals can accept a research paper of good qualities which meet the criteria of the journals.

According to Straub et al. (1994), a paper is accepted at a top journal because:

1. Its basic idea is exciting (blue ocean strategy).
2. Its research questions are nontrivial.

3. It hits themes that are popular.
4. It sufficiently uses or develops theory.
5. It follows a recognizable formula.
6. It covers the key literature sufficiently.
7. It is clean (grammatically, typographically, appearance).
8. It effectively uses or applies new methods.
9. It does not vehemently contradict the work of major movers and shakers.
10. It has a respectably large field sample (empirical, quantitative-positivist work).

The 1 to 4 items are required elements whereas items from 5 to 10 are enhancing elements. Enhancing means, if they are present, then they heighten the chances of acceptance.

Conclusion

Every journal has its own aims, objectives, style and norms for publication of papers and keeps up its reputation and standards. The main reasons for rejection of research work/papers are due to lack of originality or significance, poor study design, inadequate description of the methods, lack of focus on the theme of the paper, inappropriate/inadequate literature review, overstating the implications of the results, poor academic writing skills and lack of command over the knowledge of English language.

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