

The editor's vantage point: To publish or not - challenges for both authors and editors

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Edmund J. Y. Pajarillo, PhD, RN BC, CPHQ, NEA BC, ANEF
Editor-in-Chief

Whether or not scholarly work must be published should not even be a question for researchers and nurses. The publication and dissemination of research outcomes is an essential element of knowledge discovery, development and organization. It is the profession's lifeline in building, expanding and validating the body of knowledge of a discipline. The arduous, rigorous and scientific steps involved in research, creative work, innovations and other forms of scholarship do not end until these are disseminated, properly vetted, validated, and replicated. Publishing is a way to showcase one's work, but more importantly, for others to learn from, reflect, examine and verify outcomes for widespread application based on concrete, current, and relevant evidences.

Despite this verity, there are major issues that confront authors and journal editorial boards and staff. The single major hurdle for authors and researchers is the likelihood that their manuscript will be rejected or accepted with major revisions. There are many reasons why this is likely, and authors can reasonably persist in addressing reviewers' feedback until the manuscript is fit for publication.

Outright rejection is common. Journal editor Pickler (2021) reported over half (58%) of submissions in 2020 were desk rejections. An earlier article (Ali, 2010) gave a range of 20-30% of manuscript submissions to be blatantly unacceptable. There are many reasons for this increased rejection rate. These include unclear purpose or objectives of the research, ambiguous articulation of the research question, inadequate or substandard review of the literature to justify the research topic, lack of rigor in the methodology (weak research design, flawed sampling or sample size that is either poorly explained or not at all, variables that are not clear or well explained, results that are not lucid or do not circle back to the research purpose or question, etc.), the subject matter is not new and does not enrich the science, the theoretical assumption is unreasonable or obscure, or the statistical analysis is either wanting or inappropriate.

The choice of what research design to use can expose some researchers to many possible reasons that can result in manuscripts being rejected. Jacobowitz (2021) described 9 possible research design flaws, e.g., not obtaining permission to use an existing measurement tool, researchers creating their own data gathering instrument without following the usual requirements (pilot-testing, screening the language used in the tool, untested or absent of internal validity, etc.), biased perspective based on researcher's beliefs or perception of a phenomenon, under-powered sampling that could likely compromise the accuracy of the findings, the focus of the analysis is mainly descriptive and has little or no consideration to the relationships or interrelationships between and among variables, and findings that are reported to be significant without explaining effect sizes.

Many of the rejection issues are quite evident, particularly manuscripts written for academic purposes or course requirements,

e.g., final papers, research proposals, literature reviews, capstones, thesis or even dissertations. Professors, mentors and colleagues should offer guidance to aspiring researchers and authors. That is, if they are aware that their student, mentee or colleague submitted a manuscript. I was totally floored when I received a phone call from a colleague who was the chair of a conference's abstract review committee. Someone I know submitted an abstract that was inappropriate where I was listed as the supervising faculty! I have also seen capstone projects, typically at least 50 pages in length, shortened to 15 pages for publication review. Upon closer examination, the manuscript did not make sense because sections of the actual capstone paper were cut and pasted into the submitted article. There was another submission by a sole author whose topic was quite technical, medical and interesting but had no nursing perspective in it. It turned out that this submission was extracted from a study conducted by a team of researchers that included this author. Worse, this same article was already previously published elsewhere. There are many more inappropriate submissions that I can describe here. One can only wonder why a few authors would even think of doing these obviously unethical, unprofessional, and deceitful submissions.

Some do not even follow the journal's requirements in terms of blinding the submission, the prescribed writing style and edition, and proper placement of appendices. Submitted manuscripts require a structured abstract which is useful for preliminary understanding of the focus of the report. A structured abstract is also helpful when requesting colleagues to conduct peer reviews because it offers them the opportunity to ascertain if the subject matter is within their area of expertise or not. The inclusion of a structured abstract is often clearly listed as one of the submission requirements. Yet, there are still those who submit their manuscript with an unstructured abstract or none at all.

Editorial boards and reviewers struggle with these types of submissions. Desk rejections are often inevitable. The quality of the journal can be compromised when substandard research reports are reviewed and accepted despite blatant issues. Sending manuscripts out for review without prescreening can lead to peer reviewers shunning future work with journals that send out problematic manuscripts. In some instances, journal staff are left in a quandary between rejecting manuscripts or accepting with major revisions. Established and renowned academic journals do not have a dearth in manuscript submissions. However, it is often harder for one's manuscript to be readily accepted amidst many submissions and stiffer competition. New, up-and-coming journals, on the other hand, receive fewer submissions and often receive manuscripts with issues as in the aforementioned.

Being a new journal, *JANANY* often receives submissions from many new and aspiring researchers and authors. The mission of *JANANY* is aligned with the American Nurses Association – New York (ANA-NY), which is to foster high standards of nursing and

promote the professional and educational advancement of nurses to improve healthcare. While it is a benefit for ANA-NY members, its intended audience is not limited to its members alone. It is an open-access, international peer-reviewed journal, so that all nurses can access its scholarly articles which can be applied to their respective work settings in order to enhance nursing practice, research, education and administration.

JANANY also works closely with the authors and tries to avoid outright rejections, unless the manuscript involves rigor, ethical, theory and design concerns. It is a completely understandable feeling of loss and frustration when one's manuscript is rejected. However, every rejection is a learning opportunity to improve on one's conceptualization, organizational, analytical and writing skills. Writing and being critiqued is a humbling experience. Authors should be driven to pick up the pieces and correct issues that led to the rejection or revisions. The adage that "I gave my all in writing this manuscript" is a one-sided perspective. Many feel offended and hurt with manuscript critiques. The review process is conducted by 2-3 reviewers and then by the editorial staff. It is a rigorous process for an obvious reason. Research results and claims borne out of substandard rigor, analysis, and writing put authors, reviewers, editors and journal consumers at harm's way. Reputation and careers can be compromised or sidetracked. The worst outcome is the deleterious effect on the body of knowledge of the professional discipline. Requests for revisions are suggestions and recommendations in order to improve an otherwise flawed analysis or writing.

After the author's initial read and the overwhelming feeling of rejection or revision, it is often best to set aside the manuscript for 2-3 days and just forget about it. Once ready, process the critique and recommendations without taking them personally. Set your mind into reconstructing the manuscript based on reviewers' good intention to help you make it better. Remember to put yourself in the perspective of the reviewer (readers) and the journal's aims and status. Yes, the topic is the expertise of the author, but writing in the perspective of the intended readers is sometimes overlooked. The author assumes that the subject matter has been conveyed well, when there are many components that were missed out or assumed to be understood by the readers. Constructing a three-column table where the first column contains the reviewers' comments and recommendations, the second column shows the author's explanations to address the concerns, as well as where to find the edits, deletions or additions, and the third column lists justifications or clarifications regarding comments or recommendations that the author did not integrate. Authors should also follow the journal's format of making edits. Follow the editor's instructions when advised to make the revisions within

the manuscript using track changes and highlighting newly-added text. It is a lot easier for the editors and staff to find your edits. Removing all the comments and rewriting the entire manuscript is adding more work for all. When reviewers offer firm and sound recommendations, make sure to follow through. If you decide not to, your justification must be compelling. The editorial staff consolidate the reviewers' comments and recommendations and emphasize those that really need to be addressed. There are instances when these concerns are not corrected and the justifications are weak. The manuscript is again returned to the author, making the process long and arduous.

One's writing can only get better with frequent edits and proofreading. It is an acquired and developed skill. The American Psychological Association (APA) style of writing is now in the 7th edition, and many of its rules have changed from prior versions. Make a real effort to refer to the latest manual. There are many websites that offer free and reputable help. Another important element to pay attention to are due dates. We all lead busy lives that due dates provide order and organization to the chaos and disorder that is characteristic of our daily routine. Communicate with the editorial staff if you are pressed for time and need an extension. Once you finish addressing the reviewers' comments, read the entire manuscript, proofread and make final edits. Make sure that the article is organized, coherent and all the issues have been addressed. An additional step that is usually helpful is requesting a colleague to read your revised manuscript and offer you honest and truthful feedback.

Being able to get past the revisions and eventually publishing one's manuscript is a major accomplishment. While this is an achievement on a personal level, it is foremost significant for the nursing profession. As nurses, we share the responsibility of expanding our science. Let us keep publishing our scholarly work. By collaborating with JANANY editors and reviewers, we can succeed in shepherding the science of our profession!

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