

Expectation from an academic professional

Every profession has certain expectations from its members. The people in administration are expected to make and implement good decisions, which serve public interest. Likewise, the people in armed forces and police are expected to be vigilant and provide security to the nation and citizens of the country, respectively. What about those working in universities and academic institutions? Their main role is to do quality teaching and publish quality research papers and books. Of course, while doing so, they are also expected to be involved in proper functioning of their institution and its development process.

Let us examine why and how of good publishing by academic professionals. People looking for an academic career in the university system have to get required certificates which include a postgraduate degree and a PhD degree. PhD degree is based on research work. The researchers are required to publish their research work in the form of journal papers. Once a person enters the university system, (s)he is required to publish further to get up gradation in his/her career.

So one reason as to why an academic has to publish research papers is progression in their career. Besides, publication helps in the dissemination of knowledge to a larger body of readers, many of whom are also academics, spread, theoretically, the world over.

How to write a quality research paper and publish it in a good journal is a task that can be mastered only through a continuous effort. It is a never ending effort. A research paper has to broadly carry the following contents: title, abstract, keywords, introduction, literature review, research objective(s), methodology, data analysis, discussion, conclusion, references, etc. There may be minor variations in this sequence and these headings in different research papers. All scientific papers, based on data, will have tables, figures, equations, etc. Tables and figures have to have a number and an appropriate caption. All equations have to be numbered.

A title such as “select aspects of mergers and acquisition” may not be good enough. The title should reflect the theme of what is contained in the paper. For example, “A comparative analysis of financial performance before and after merger and acquisition (M&A)” is a better title than the above. A good abstract gives a precise resume or summary of the contents of the full paper. If the abstract is not well written, it may discourage the reader from going through the whole paper. Keywords should not be too many. Yet, at the same time, they should include important technical terms around which the whole narrative of the paper has been woven.

Introduction is written in such a manner that it justifies the topicality of the paper. It provides elaborate background information. Literature review further builds up the case for why the paper under consideration is a good addition to the extant literature on the subject. Objectives have to be precise and should preferably be written as: “to determine [...]”, “to identify [...]”, “to establish a relationship between [...]”, etc. Objectives, written in a descriptive paragraph, are at times, difficult to understand, even irritating to read. In case these are too long and vague, the purpose would get defeated.

Methodology of the research has to be mapped against the objectives. If the objectives are more than one, it would be desirable that methodology be presented sequentially to respond to each objective. All the statistical and mathematical formulae to be used need to be numbered and the meaning of algebraic/Greek symbols need to be clearly written. Data in a typical research paper may be both secondary and primary. Alternatively, the whole paper may be based only on secondary or only on primary data. In any case, the source(s) of secondary data and the method of collecting primary data should be given.



The heart of the research is the analysis of the data to address the objectives with the help of the methodology, already delineated. The analysis results into creation of tables, figures and charts, etc. The tables should have enough columns and rows to make them reader friendly. They should each have a number assigned and an appropriate caption. Figures should have captions and scales, etc., indicating as to what is on *X*-axis, *Y*-axis, *Z*-axis, etc.

Discussion of results that are contained in tables and figures is a must. It is an art to elaborate on the findings, with sufficient details and logical flow from one paragraph to the next. The discussion should have a thread running all along just as beads in a garland. Disjointed paragraphs do not make a good reading and may even confuse readers. The language should be simple without jargons or hyperbole. It is good to keep three Cs in mind: be clear, concise and correct.

Conclusion, implications and limitations are to be given adequate space at the end. References should be complete in all respects such as author(s), year of publication, title of the paper, name of the journal, volume number, issue number, page numbers, etc. Nowadays, citation indexes use the references, cited in a paper, for counting purpose. All the references, cited in the text, must be listed at the end and vice versa.

Writing a paper is one aspect; selecting an appropriate journal for its publication is another one. The journal can be very specific, catering to specific discipline, such as finance, marketing, HR, operations, etc. On the other hand, there are journals which publish a mix of papers from different disciplines. There has been an issue of recognizing journals as “reputed” and “non-reputed”. This issue is not yet settled. Of late, some efforts have been made to generate lists of publications and then assign a category to each one of them. For example, ABDC is one such list where journals are categorized as A*, A, B, and C wherein A* is the most reputed and C the least. Likewise, the ranking can be based on cite score and impact factor in a descending order. Higher the cite score or impact factor, more reputed is the journal. The authors have to do screening of the journals to figure out where their paper would fit in.

It would be prudent to look at the relative ranking of the journals carefully. A journal in “C” category of the ABDC list may carry a high cite score and/or impact factor. On the contrary, another journal of “A” category of the ABDC list may have much lower cite score and/or impact factor. Some journals may be listed only in one of the many ranking frameworks. The question may arise: what about those journals which are perceived to follow a certain degree of rigor in terms of their review process, yet they do not figure in any of the listed ranking framework such as ABDC or Scopus Cite score or Thompson Impact Factor, etc. The potential author has to take a calculated risk in publishing in such journals. Perhaps some of those journals would get included in one or more ranking frameworks in future. So these journals should not be ignored in case the author’s main purpose is to disseminate knowledge and not to have the published paper counted merely for career progression.

After the submission of his/her paper to a journal, the author may get one of the following responses: (a) immediate rejection, (b) review comments for improvement and refinement or (c) acceptance. The outcomes (c) is rare while (a) and (b) are more common. After responding to review comments as per (b), the final outcome may be either acceptance or rejection, or even suggestion for further refinement. As already mentioned, the motivation for publishing the research work in “reputed” journals can be for career progression in case of a young researcher. For others, it is for self-satisfaction as well to disseminate the knowledge to a larger body of readers, assuming that more reputed journals are read by much greater number of readers than the less reputed ones.

However, we venture to suggest that authors/researchers should not hesitate to contribute their papers to “less reputed” or new journals so that these also can move forward

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towards being “reputed” in due course of time. Another important point that we would flag here is that there is no single style of writing papers. We have indicated just one style. For example, a state-of-the-art paper or a purely theoretical paper would differ significantly in style as compared to an application paper or a case study. One good approach would be to have a careful look on similar papers published in the targeted journal. We understand that publishing paper in good journals is not an easy task. Yet, we all have to keep trying to disseminate our research findings through right academic channels.

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