Insung Jung

Pathways to International Publication in the Social Sciences

A Guide for Early Career and Non-Native English Researchers

Springer

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Preface

My Personal Journey

After earning my degree from Indiana University, Bloomington, I returned to South Korea to join Korea National Open University, a leading institution in distance education. I spent a decade there teaching distance learners, publishing books, and steadily building my reputation in the field. By my 30s, I had settled into the role of a highly-regarded national expert. However, this identity was about to shift dramatically.

In 2000, my 40s brought a whirlwind of change. I transitioned to Ewha Womans University, a more globally focused institution, while my children entered the next level of their schooling, the older in middle school and the younger in primary school. Naturally, my responsibilities increased as I balanced the roles of mother and full-time professor. At work, the demands were staggering—administrative duties, research, and a pressing need to publish in international journals. Time became my most precious commodity, and I found myself questioning how I could manage it all.

The academic environment in Korea had evolved rapidly. Universities began emphasizing international publications, with professors evaluated more rigorously. Securing tenure was no longer guaranteed without consistently producing high-quality research. As I navigated these pressures, I also recognized a deeper shift in my professional identity. I had long been the "leading expert in distance education in Korea," but now I had to envision something greater: becoming an international researcher.

This shift did not come easily. Daily commutes, once exhausting, became my time to think and plan. I began to realize that the boundaries of distance education did not need to be confined to Korea, and neither did my identity. From that realization, I redefined both myself and my career path, with the goal of becoming a global scholar.

Time Management and the Daily Grind

As my career evolved, the biggest challenge I faced was time management. Between my work, family, and research, it felt like there were always more tasks than hours in the day. The demands of teaching, administrative duties, and publishing left little room for the deep, focused research needed for international contributions. I quickly realized that in order to achieve my goal, I had to get a handle on my time.

I sat down at my desk and mapped out my time. With a planner from the university, I organized my year into months, weeks, and days, creating a manageable time management system. I reserved weekends for rest and family, scheduling key meetings for Monday mornings and midweek check-ins on Thursdays. I taught classes on Monday and Thursday afternoons, kept Tuesdays for mandatory meetings, and set aside Wednesdays for research. Fridays were dedicated to preparing for classes and guiding students. In the evenings, after my family went to bed, I devoted two hours to reading and writing.

I learned to prioritize and protect my time, ensuring research hours were just as important as meetings. If someone requested a meeting during those hours, I suggested alternatives. This discipline allowed me to make steady progress on my papers and research, little by little. The structure I created became my guide, helping me balance work, family, and academic responsibilities while still carving out essential time for research. Each step brought me closer to my goal of becoming a global scholar, and I began to treasure these dedicated research hours.

Facing Doubts and Building Confidence

Despite my meticulous planning, one obstacle remained: confidence. Writing for international journals in English felt daunting. Even though I had studied and worked in the U.S., the idea of writing and submitting papers on my own seemed overwhelming. Doubts crept in. Could I really succeed in this new international arena?

Help came in the form of a mentor, an esteemed colleague in the field of distance education. His encouragement reminded me that I was not alone in this process, and with his support, I began to regain confidence. His simple words—"You can do it"—became a lifeline. Eventually, we started collaborating on projects, making the journey feel less solitary and far more achievable. Sadly, he passed away suddenly a few years ago. Though he is no longer with me, his encouraging words continue to guide me. They not only help me move forward in my own journey but also inspire me to support and uplift other researchers, just as he once did for me.

Collaboration as a Key to Success

As I grew more comfortable in my new academic identity, I realized that I did not have to tackle everything on my own. I sought out collaborators, colleagues who shared my passion for research. Together, we co-authored papers, each project a stepping stone toward more meaningful international contributions. Through collaboration, the quality of my research improved, and I gained the courage to reach out to the global academic community.

Slowly, the results followed. My first international publication was a modest four-page literature review, co-authored with a colleague. Over time, I published in several international journals, joined editorial boards, and even co-authored books with renowned global scholars.

From Local Researcher to Global Scholar

Looking back, it took a decade to evolve from a local researcher to an internationally recognized academic. This journey was not quick or easy, but each step added to the compound growth of both achievements and joy. What once felt overwhelming and nearly impossible slowly became a natural part of my routine.

As I moved forward, I realized that growth and collaboration are ongoing processes. Each new goal built on the previous ones, and the joy of working with others in the field became a source of inspiration. Today, I continue to explore new frontiers in research, confident that time and persistence, along with the support of others, will lead to even greater success.

Why I am Sharing My Journey

Although many scholars have achieved far more than I have, I decided to share my story because I believe my experiences can help guide social science researchers, particularly those early in their careers and for whom English is not a native language, through the challenges of academic publishing. What I once shared with my advisees and colleagues, and later on my personal blog in Korean, I now present this guide, written in English, for a broader audience. My hope is to spare you unnecessary stress and help you focus on what truly matters for success in international publishing.

Sharing the Joy of Establishing a Broader Identity

I want to share the joy and fulfillment that came not just from publishing in international journals but from embracing a new identity. As Carol S. Dweck explains in *Mindset*, "A simple belief about yourself guides a large part of your life." This resonates deeply with my experience. Shifting from seeing myself as a local expert to envisioning myself as a global scholar transformed my career. That simple yet profound belief propelled me forward, and I hope you find the courage to embrace a broader identity in your own journey.

Presenting a Small, Manageable, and Rewarding Strategy

Another reason I am sharing my story is to offer a practical strategy that is small, manageable, and highly rewarding. In *Atomic Habits*, James Clear emphasizes the power of small, continuous improvements over time. My success was built on a system of steady progress—carving out time for research and writing, little by little. This approach was not about drastic changes or huge time investments. It was about consistency. I want you to see how powerful small, daily actions can be in building a foundation for long-term success. Clear's book is a valuable resource for developing good habits that will support your growth.

Sharing the Fulfillment of Collaboration

I also want to highlight the fulfillment that comes from collaboration. At the start of my career, trying to publish internationally felt isolating and overwhelming. However, once I began collaborating with other researchers, the process became far more enjoyable and productive. Working with others allowed me to grow faster and produce better research. I want to encourage you to seek out collaborations—they can be the key to unlocking your potential and making the publishing process much smoother.

Overcoming Challenges in International Publishing as a Non-Native Researcher

I want to speak to those of you who, like me, are non-native English speakers and early career researchers who have not yet entered the world of international publications. Writing for international journals can be tough, especially with differing standards and language, and when it is your first time. But it is possible—I have done it.

Despite being raised and educated in Korea, I have published widely and gained global recognition. I share my story not to boast, but to offer strategies that helped me overcome those initial challenges. By sharing both my successes and mistakes, I hope to make your path easier and help you navigate international publishing with confidence, so you can focus on becoming the researcher you aspire to be.

How the Guide Is Structured

This guide accompanies early career and non-native English researchers in the social sciences on their journey to submit their first paper to an English-language international journal. Picture yourself as an explorer entering uncharted territory. You will navigate necessary knowledge, preparation techniques, essential mindsets, and potential collaborations. This guide provides crucial tips for a successful and enjoyable journey through academic publishing but does not cover research methodologies or the conduct of research itself. It assumes your research is either ongoing or completed and focuses on crafting your work into an English paper suitable for international submission. Real-life examples and checklists are provided throughout to facilitate your writing process.

The guide comprises 21 chapters (excluding the Preface), organized as follows:

Preface: Beginning with the author's personal story, this section provides an overview of the guide's structure, including brief introductions to each chapter. It also outlines the guide's primary aim: helping graduate, early career and non-native English researchers in the social sciences navigate the international publication process and succeed in their academic endeavors through practical guidance and real examples.

Part I: Foundation and Preparation (Six Introductory Chapters)

Chapter 1—Nervous About Your First Submission? Essential Preparation Tips: Focuses on preparing researchers mentally and logistically for the publication journey. It covers essential topics such as setting a productive mindset, creating a supportive writing environment, and understanding international publishing ethics.

Chapter 2—The Stories of International Stars: Secrets to Their Success: Shares success stories from seven renowned researchers with diverse backgrounds who have excelled in international publishing. It offers insights into their strategies, helping readers shape their own aspirations based on these examples.

Chapter 3—Will My Paper Be Well-Received Internationally? Discusses how to assess whether a paper is suitable for international journals. It explains the differences between domestic and international journals, helping researchers identify if their work aligns with global research standards.

Chapter 4—Identifying Reputable Journals and Avoiding Predatory Pitfalls: Offers guidelines on selecting high-quality journals, including understanding impact factors, ranking systems, and how to avoid predatory journals that exploit researchers.

Chapter 5—Smart Tools and Ethics: A New Era in Research Writing: Introduces digital tools to help researchers, particularly non-native speakers, enhance their academic writing in English. It covers tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT for editing and idea generation, as well as reference management software such as EndNote and RefWorks to streamline the writing process.

Chapter 6—Open Access to Scientific Information: Explores the significance of open access (OA) in academic research, helping early career researchers understand its advantages and challenges. It also provides an overview of different types of OA, the quality of OA journals, common concerns like article processing charges (APCs), and essential resources for identifying legitimate OA venues.

Part II: From Journal Selection to Writing and Submission (A 15-Week Guide)

Chapter 7—Week 1: Choosing Your Journal and Understanding Guidelines: Guides researchers in selecting the most suitable journal for their work, focusing on aligning the research topic with the journal's scope, audience, and submission guidelines. It provides practical steps for evaluating journal impact factors, readership demographics, and likelihood of acceptance. By the end of the chapter, researchers will have a clear understanding of which journals best match their research, improving their chances of publication.

Chapter 8—Week 2: Building a Solid Structure for Your Manuscript: Explains how to organize a manuscript's key components, such as introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion. It provides strategies for building a strong foundation for both qualitative and quantitative research papers. Readers will learn how to structure their work in a logical, coherent manner that flows well, ensuring that their manuscript is easy to read and meets the expectations of international journals.

Chapter 9—Week 3: Utilizing ChatGPT and Prompts Strategically and Responsibly: Guides early career and non-native English researchers on effectively using ChatGPT for academic writing. It highlights the importance of specific prompts to avoid misinterpretation and unnecessary changes, supported by prompt

examples. Ethical use of ChatGPT is emphasized, along with recommendations for maintaining high-quality work.

Chapter 10—Week 4: Crafting a Compelling Title and Abstract: Offers techniques for writing attention-grabbing titles and abstracts that engage journal readers including editors and reviewers. It emphasizes clarity, precision, and succinctly conveying the research's essence. Through examples, readers will learn how to balance informativeness with brevity, ensuring that their title and abstract reflect the core theme and significance of their study.

Chapter 11—Week 5: Creating a Strong and Captivating Introduction: Teaches researchers how to craft introductions that engage readers while clearly presenting the research problem, theoretical framework, and research questions. It offers examples of effective introductions and provides step-by-step guidance to ensure readers grasp the need and significance of the research from the outset.

Chapter 12—Week 6: Writing the Quantitative Methods Section: Explains how to thoroughly describe research design, participants, data collection, and analysis for quantitative research. It helps researchers present their methods comprehensively and transparently, ensuring replicability. Through examples, it guides researchers in conveying complex methodological details clearly and concisely.

Chapter 13—Week 7: Writing the Qualitative Methods Section: Explains how to thoroughly describe research design, cases, data collection, and analysis for qualitative research, ensuring the process is clearly and coherently presented. Supported by examples, it helps researchers effectively articulate their qualitative approach, making it easy for both reviewers and readers to follow.

Chapter 14—Week 8: Writing the Document Analysis Methods Section: Provides detailed guidance on structuring the methods section for research based on document analysis. It explains how to describe the selection, examination, analysis, and interpretation of documents, with relevant examples that ensure clarity and rigor.

Chapter 15—Week 9: Presenting Research Results: Teaches researchers how to present their findings in a way that aligns with their research questions and international publishing standards. It focuses on the clear, logical presentation of data and results while highlighting the study's significance. Examples help illustrate how to structure and explain results effectively, maximizing their impact.

Chapter 16—Week 10: Crafting the Discussion Section: Explains how to discuss research results or findings in relation to existing literature, emphasizing the study's contribution to both knowledge and practical application. It includes examples of effective discussions and offers tips on connecting results or findings to broader academic debates, ensuring the research is positioned to make a meaningful impact.

Chapter 17—Week 11: Concluding Your Research: Provides guidance on writing strong conclusions that summarize the key contributions of the research

and discuss its broader implications, while also indicating the study's limitations and future research directions. Examples help researchers frame their conclusions to highlight the study's value, potential impact, and limitations, leaving a lasting impression on readers and reviewers.

Chapter 18—Week 12: Finalizing References and Ensuring Consistency: Guides researchers through the critical final steps of preparing their manuscript by focusing on finalizing references and ensuring consistency throughout the paper. It emphasizes the importance of proper citation, helping researchers ensure that all sources are accurately referenced according to the required style guide. Additionally, it provides strategies for reviewing key sections—such as the abstract and conclusion—to verify that they consistently and accurately reflect the research findings.

Chapter 19—Week 13: Final Editing and Formatting Your Paper: Focuses on the final stages of manuscript preparation, offering detailed advice on editing and formatting for submission. It guides researchers on how to polish their work to ensure a professional presentation, increasing the likelihood of acceptance. It emphasizes enhancing both the readability and professionalism of the manuscript.

Chapter 20—Week 14: Submission and Handling Review Results: Provides step-by-step guidance on the submission process, from submitting the manuscript to handling reviewer feedback. It explains how to respond constructively to reviewer comments and make necessary revisions, while offering advice on approaching potential rejection with resilience and professionalism, supported by examples.

Chapter 21—Week 15: Post-Publication Strategies and Conclusion: Explores what happens after publication and introduces strategies for increasing the visibility of your work. This includes tips on leveraging academic conferences, social media, and networking opportunities to build a professional presence and enhance the impact of your research post-publication. Additionally, it emphasizes three key factors—preparation, persistence, and confidence—as the most critical elements for successful international publishing, serving as the concluding focus of the guide.

Who Should Read This and How to Benefit

This guide is ideal for:

- Graduate students in the social sciences preparing for their first international publication.
- Early career researchers aiming to build a strong publication record.
- Non-native English researchers looking to navigate the complexities of international publishing.

- Experienced researchers who want to refine their publication strategies and improve their chances of acceptance in prestigious journals.

  While addressing the specific needs of non-native English speakers, its practical insights are useful for native English speakers seeking a systematic approach to academic publishing.

  I hope this guide provides practical advice to help social science researchers both overcome challenges and successfully publish their work in reputable international journals. To make the most of it, I recommend setting aside specific times each day or week for writing. Consistency is key to staying focused and achieving steady progress. While everyone's schedules and situations will vary, the important thing is to work regularly and steadily, rather than trying to accomplish everything at once.

Author's Notes

This guide was proofread, edited, and refined with the assistance of OpenAI's ChatGPT-4o (Version as of October 2024), serving as a complement to the human editorial process. All original content was written by the author, who critically evaluated and validated the AI-assisted edits to ensure academic rigor and uphold ethical standards in the field. The author also reviewed potential biases in the AI-generated content before making final revisions. Responsibility for the final version of the paper rests solely with the author.

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Part I
Foundation and Preparation (Six Introductory Chapters)

Chapter 1
Nervous About Your First Submission? Essential Preparation Tips

Abstract Submitting to an international journal for the first time can be a daunting yet crucial step for social science researchers. This chapter offers essential preparation tips to guide early career and non-native English researchers through the process, from selecting the right journal to overcoming language barriers and developing strong academic habits. It highlights the importance of enhancing English reading comprehension as a foundation for successful writing and offers strategies for developing consistent reading and writing routines. The chapter also covers the benefits of creating structured outlines, iterative revision, and productive writing environments. By following these practical tips, researchers can transform the publication process into a manageable and rewarding experience, hopefully boosting their confidence and enhancing their chances of successfully publishing in international journals.

Is Fluency in English Mandatory?

Certainly not! If you have been learning English since elementary or middle school and are reading this guide on publishing in international journals, you already have the potential to succeed. However, if you find it challenging to understand English papers, this will be a more immediate obstacle than improving your writing skills. Strengthening your reading comprehension should be your priority.

Reading Before Writing: A Critical Foundation

While English education experts may hold differing opinions, my experience has shown that, in the early stages of international publishing, reading comprehension is more crucial than writing. Mastering comprehension is a personal skill that only you

can cultivate, as it allows you to fully grasp the content, arguments, and nuances of academic papers. Writing, though important, can be significantly supported by tools like Google Translate, AI platforms, and professional editors. These tools and editors can help with grammar, sentence structure, and tone, but they cannot replace your judgment. You must ensure that the translated or edited text accurately conveys your original intent, uses the right expressions, and maintains the appropriate academic tone. This ability to evaluate and refine what tools and editors provide is essential for producing high-quality, publishable work. Poorly translated or edited work is easily detected by journal reviewers, making it essential to master reading comprehension first. In short, while technology and editing services can assist your writing, only you can refine your comprehension and evaluate the subtle meanings in academic texts.

If reading English academic papers is difficult for you, the key is consistent practice. Make it a habit to read papers from reputable journals in your field. Reading daily will lead to noticeable improvement over time, as academic papers have unique styles and structures that require specific strategies to understand. For more on enhancing academic reading skills, see Wallace and Wray (2021).

Let me share my experience as a graduate student. I set a goal to read academic papers for an hour before bed each night. To stay disciplined, I placed the paper and my notes on my pillow every morning. This habit kept me on track, helping me read two to three papers per week. Over time, it greatly improved both my reading and writing skills. If you are unsure where to begin, this approach could help. By starting to read English academic papers now, you are laying the foundation for success in academic writing. I can guarantee you that a bright future awaits with this simple routine.

Building Productive Writing Habits Alongside Reading

As your reading habit grows, you will naturally seek to improve your writing. The more you read, the better you will understand what makes writing effective. At this point, developing both skills together is beneficial, as studies by Ahmed et al. (2014) and Phyo et al. (2024) show.

How can you build productive writing habits while staying committed to reading? I strongly suggest you dedicate time once or twice a week in a distraction-free space to write. Establishing this routine will help you stay consistent. Once you have set the time and place, consider the following strategies grounded in neuroscience and learning theory to improve your writing.

First, before you begin writing, create a comprehensive outline that lays the foundation of your paper. Start by identifying the main sections and outlining the content each will cover. This plan should be detailed enough to span two to three pages, helping you visualize the structure and content of your paper. By listing key points for each section, you can gradually build on them, turning the outline into a fully developed paper.

Second, remember that improving your writing often begins with reading. As you read, summarize key papers related to your topic in English to deepen your understanding. Thorough knowledge of the subject will make the writing process smoother and more informed. Observing how others present ideas can serve as a model for your own work. By reading high-quality papers, you will refine your approach to structuring, planning, and presenting your arguments.

Third, keep in mind that writing is an iterative process. Even experienced researchers rarely get it right on the first try. Focus on drafting, revising, and refining your work through multiple rounds. Rather than aiming for perfection initially, concentrate on enhancing sentence structure, clarity, and logic with each revision. This process allows you to internalize new information and view your work from fresh perspectives, improving both your writing and your understanding of the topic.

These strategies will be expanded in later chapters, allowing you to adapt them to your needs and integrate other methods that work for you.

How Can I Find Time in a Busy Schedule?

Writing a paper requires dedicated time and effort. You may plan to write during spare moments, on weekends, or a little each day. However, spare time for writing rarely appears on its own. Vague plans like these often lead to delays or no action at all. While you may initially rely on willpower, life's unexpected events—urgent tasks, family obligations, or travel—can quickly interfere, as we all know too well. To stay on track, a more structured approach is essential. Allow me to share my effective time management strategy.

Integrating Writing into a Daily Routine

To successfully incorporate writing into your routine, start by analyzing your daily schedule. Identify the essential tasks that must be completed and mark them on your calendar. Focus on necessities rather than activities you want to do. Then, add habitual tasks, such as exercising or eating, to see the remaining available time.

A proven strategy for adding writing is "*habit stacking*," popularized by Fogg (2020). This involves scheduling writing before or after daily activities. For example, you could read papers before bed, and then write 100 words afterward. Alternatively, write for two hours each weekend morning after breakfast or aim for 200 words before lunch every other day. Remember that linking writing to existing habits makes it easier to maintain.

Additionally, set goals based on output, not just time. Instead of simply writing for three hours, aim to complete 200 words within a certain period. This keeps you focused on measurable progress rather than just the clock. Personally, I find blending both methods—balancing output goals with dedicated time—works best for me. For

instance, I will set aside an hour with the goal of drafting 200 words. This approach ensures I stay productive while also allowing the flexibility to adapt when things do not go as planned. It is one of the strategies that has kept my writing consistent, even on the busiest days.

Maximizing Productivity on a Dedicated Writing Day

If your schedule allows, designate one full day a week as a "writing day." This day should focus solely on writing, but to prevent burnout, break it into manageable blocks with clear start and end times. Writing all day without breaks can lead to fatigue and reduced productivity.

For example, my writing day starts with an hour of writing after breakfast, followed by exercise and a snack. Then I write for another hour before lunch. After lunch, I review and revise what I wrote in the morning. I take a short walk to refresh, and then write for another 1–2 h before dinner. This flexible routine often helps me exceed my goals and feel more energized. Additionally, ideas generated during breaks or other activities are often integrated into my next writing session.

Breaking Down Tasks for Efficient Writing

One effective way to maintain writing momentum is to break down large tasks into smaller, manageable units. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the entire project, focus on completing a specific portion within a set timeframe. For instance, start by dedicating 30 min to outlining your paper's sections, jotting down main points, or writing the first couple of sentences of your introduction. Once that has been done, use the next time block to flesh out the outline or expand on those initial sentences. This approach keeps the process moving without feeling overly daunting.

For me, starting small helps reduce the overwhelm that comes with large writing tasks. Whether it is outlining or drafting just a few sentences, getting started builds momentum. That momentum makes it easier to continue, and as I break the work into smaller chunks, the project feels more manageable. Over time, I find that I can naturally extend my writing sessions as my confidence grows, allowing for steady progress toward my larger goals. I guarantee that this approach will make the writing process feel less daunting and more achievable.

Incentivizing Writing with Rewards

Reward yourself after hitting small goals. For example, after one hour of focused work, enjoy a snack, listen to music, or take a short walk. I would treat myself to bigger rewards after completing several sections, like dining out or watching a movie. This method, known as "*temptation bundling*" by Professor Milkman (2021), links a necessary task (writing) with a pleasurable activity (a reward or pleasure), reducing procrastination and boosting productivity. This combination makes the writing process more enjoyable while enhancing both mental and physical well-being.

Where Should I Create a Productive Writing Environment?

Writing a paper requires a specific place. If you are working on a paper, where will you read, write, and think? At your desk in the research lab, at home, in bed, or at a café? For busy individuals with limited time, creating an environment that enhances focus and promotes efficiency is essential. The following strategies are based on my personal experience and supported by research in learning space design and psychology. Use these tips to create a space that enhances your writing process.

Starting the Day by Tidying up

How does tidying up relate to productive writing? In my experience, it sets a positive tone for the day. For example, making my bed gives me a sense of accomplishment, as if I have already completed my first task. I adopted this habit during graduate school when I was balancing studies, reports, parenting, and other responsibilities. A tidy space helped me stay focused and more productive. In his 2014 University of Texas commencement speech, Admiral McRaven emphasized that starting the day by making your bed can boost productivity and lead to success throughout the day. His book *Make Your Bed* further explores how small actions can spark significant change. Starting with this simple task can help you create a more organized and focused environment for writing. Give it a try—you will notice the positive effect right away.

Designating a Space for Writing

Creating a dedicated writing space can make a big difference. Whether it is a new spot at home or a reconfigured desk at the lab, having a space solely for writing helps you stay focused. I used to designate different spaces for different tasks—my office desk for preparing classes and my home desk for writing papers and books. For me, keeping materials specific to each task in their respective spaces reduced distractions and let me jump straight into work. It is well-known that a clean, clutter-free workspace enhances focus and productivity, while a well-ventilated area with ample oxygen supports optimal brain function (Laurent et al. 2021). Some people may thrive in environments with background noise. The key is to find what works best for you.

Preparing the Environment in Advance

Gather all necessary materials—notes, tools, laptop, and coffee—in advance to avoid interruptions during work. Constantly searching for items disrupts workflow and breaks focus. Also, organize the digital space by keeping your desktop clean and placing the folder you are working on in a visible spot. I always keep the working file on my desktop and back it up to the cloud, ensuring easy access and editing anytime, anywhere, and it works great.

Maintaining and Improving the Workspace

Your writing environment will evolve over time, so it is important to regularly maintain and improve it. I make it a habit to tidy my workspace once a week, incorporating it into my regular house cleaning routine. Just a few minutes are enough to keep things organized. This way, I manage the environment without feeling overwhelmed by the need to reorganize constantly. By keeping your space organized and adapting as your needs change, you will create an environment that supports consistent progress.

What Habits Should I Cultivate for Success?

We have already discussed a few important habits. I particularly recommend developing the following habits that are both highly effective and enjoyable.

Starting a Day by Tidying Up

It is a simple but powerful habit that, when done daily, gradually expands its positive effects. As this habit becomes ingrained, you will naturally feel the urge to organize your surroundings and create an environment conducive to writing. It always does for me.

Consistently Reading and Writing at a Set Time and Place

Try to cultivate the habit of consistently reading and writing at a specific time and place for your paper-writing journey. Although it may seem small, this is one of the most powerful habits for writing a paper. Once established, you will not just be preparing a paper for a single submission to an international journal—you will become a researcher who continually shares your knowledge with the world.

Ending the Day Positively

Ending the day on a positive note can gradually boost confidence. Make it a habit to reflect on your writing progress, whether by discussing it with yourself, family, or friends. Use positive phrasing. Instead of saying, "The abstracts were hard to understand," add, "But I learned more about writing abstracts," or "My reading speed improved." By focusing on progress, you will end the day feeling positive, and this habit will build confidence over time. It has certainly worked for me.

Letting Go of Unhelpful Habits

Certain habits can hold you back from writing a good paper. One major barrier is perfectionism—the pressure to get everything right on the first try. Instead, focus on getting your ideas down without judgment; you can refine them later. Also, let go of excessive worry and negativity, as they can block your creativity and slow you down. Adopt a flexible attitude toward feedback, seeing it as a tool for improvement, not criticism. By letting go of perfectionism, fear of mistakes, and resistance to feedback, you will make the writing process more productive and enjoyable.

What Ethical Guidelines Should I Follow When Submitting a Paper?

As mentioned in the Preface, this guide is for researchers preparing to submit work to international journals. Whether you are currently conducting research or have completed it, adhering to ethical standards is essential. Here are key considerations to keep in mind when preparing your paper.

Avoiding Plagiarism at All Costs

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited in both domestic and international journals. Researchers must not present others' work or data as their own, nor reuse content from previously published papers without proper citation. Translating a paper into another language and submitting it as new work is also unethical without proper citation.

Most journals use plagiarism detection software like Turnitin or iThenticate, and social science journals tend to follow APA plagiarism guidelines. Penalties for plagiarism can be severe, so it is crucial to check for it multiple times before submission. If you plan to write papers based on your dissertation, make sure to clearly state they are derived from it. In the social sciences, a dissertation is typically considered unpublished material. However, some universities require publication in international journals for degree completion, so it is essential to review your university's regulations.

Following Ethical Guidelines for Authorship and Order

Authorship should be granted only to those who made significant contributions to the research, such as planning, data collection, or analysis. When developing a paper from a doctoral dissertation, the student is typically listed as the first author, while the supervising professor is listed as second if their contributions go beyond standard supervision.

It is unethical to list someone as an author solely due to their position or relationship. Contributions like English editing or survey distribution should be acknowledged in the Acknowledgments section, not the author list. The order of authors should reflect each person's contribution, with the primary contributor listed first. Journals often require a statement detailing each author's contributions and accurate contact information.

Sharing Data for Verification

Researchers should be prepared to share their data for verification upon request. This practice allows other experts to reanalyze and verify findings, maintaining the integrity of the research. Many international journals require data disclosure to ensure the validity of results.

To wrap up, adhering to these ethical guidelines is essential to maintaining the quality of scholarly work and fostering trust among researchers. Be sure to follow the specific ethical guidelines of the journal you are submitting to, or refer to the APA's ethics code (https://www.apa.org/ethics/code) if none are provided.

Checklist: Essential Preparation Tips for Effective Writing

- Block dedicated time for reading and writing to ensure consistency, pairing it with existing daily activities to build a strong writing habit.
- Prioritize reading English academic papers to improve comprehension and writing style, which will enhance your overall output.
- Set output goals rather than focusing solely on time spent writing, and break large tasks into smaller blocks to maintain momentum and avoid overwhelm.
- Develop detailed outlines to guide your writing, stay organized, and set a clear direction for each section of your paper.
- Create a distraction-free workspace to boost productivity and help maintain focus during writing sessions.
- Be prepared to write multiple drafts and revise extensively, letting go of perfectionism to focus on steady progress and flexibility.
- Follow all ethical guidelines set by the journal and relevant institutions to ensure the integrity and credibility of your work.

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Chapter 2
The Stories of International Stars: Secrets to Their Success

Abstract Publishing in international journals offers more than just a way to get your work recognized—it allows researchers to share their findings globally, influencing academic discourse, policy decisions, and real-world outcomes. This chapter introduces seven accomplished researchers, each with a proven track record of impactful publications across various fields in the social sciences, including distance education, media studies, AI in education, and educational technology. I have had the privilege of observing their dedication and achievements firsthand, collaborating on exciting projects, and most recently, discussing their secrets to publication success in virtual conversations. Interestingly, despite being based in countries such as Korea, Japan, Canada, the United States, Türkiye, Germany, and Spain, these scholars share several common strategies for success while also employing unique approaches. By examining both their shared and individual methods, this chapter provides key insights into how they consistently achieve global impact, offering valuable lessons for both early career and experienced researchers.

Keywords Collaboration and networking · Global research impact · Journal selection · Persistent writing · Research strategies

Dr. Dianne Conrad Story

"*My own secrets are simply to plug away and keep on going.*"

Dr. Conrad, now retired from *Athabasca University* in Canada, remains active in research and publishing. She is a former editor of an SSCI-indexed international journal, *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning (IRRODL)*.

Dr. Conrad emphasizes that researchers must believe in the value of their work—both in research and writing—and consistently uphold that belief. She hopes that her papers have contributed significantly to her field. She enjoys her research topics and looks forward to where her work will take her. She stresses the importance to her of conducting research and writing based on personal interests and passions.

However, Dr. Conrad points out that belief in the value of one's research and passion alone is not enough. She highlights the importance of discipline in both research and writing. While Dr. Conrad usually writes a little each day, she allows herself the flexibility to wait for creative inspiration when time permits. She also emphasizes the importance of careful editing and re-editing to enhance the quality of the work.

In summary, Dr. Conrad's success stems from her passion for subjects of interest, maintaining consistent effort and focus, writing each day, and being patient while waiting for moments of creative inspiration.

Here are Dr. Conrad's seven key strategies for success:

(1) Seek advice from colleagues or mentors who have published successfully.
(2) Write about topics you are knowledgeable about and passionate about.
(3) Approach writing with diligence and attention to detail, continuously improving through multiple rounds of editing.
(4) Research various journals and choose those that align with your research and values.
(5) Don't give up if you find it challenging to get published in a good journal; seek other opportunities.
(6) Uphold integrity by avoiding unethical practices such as plagiarism.
(7) Collaborate with co-researchers or co-authors when working alone is difficult.

Prof. Aras Bozkurt Story

"*I make sure that I have inner motivation and a realistic working schedule.*"

Prof. Bozkurt is a distinguished professor at *Anadolu University*, a premier distance teaching university in Türkiye, where he conducts pioneering research at the intersection of education and cutting-edge educational technologies, particularly artificial intelligence. He has authored numerous papers in prestigious journals and is also recognized as the editor of the international journals, *Open Praxis* and the *Asian Journal of Distance Education*.

His research strategy combines personal curiosity with strict scheduling and strategic planning. By focusing on topics that genuinely interest him, Prof. Bozkurt maintains high levels of concentration and motivation. He allocates time to each project based on its priority and potential contribution to the field, allowing him to manage multiple research projects simultaneously while ensuring balanced effort across his work.

A crucial aspect of Prof. Bozkurt's approach is selecting the appropriate journal or platform for each publication. He aims to publish each manuscript in a venue that maximizes its impact and reach within the academic community, thereby enhancing its influence.

A key element of his methodology is a strong commitment to reading. Prof. Bozkurt believes that extensive reading provides a broad and deep understanding of

his research topics. This continuous learning process not only expands his knowledge but also provides the drive and inspiration necessary for writing high-quality papers.

In conclusion, Prof. Bozkurt's success stems from his ability to sustain intrinsic motivation, adhere to a disciplined work schedule, and give every manuscript the attention it requires. By combining curiosity-driven research with careful planning and strategic decision-making, he optimizes his productivity and the outcomes of his academic endeavors.

Here are Prof. Bozkurt's seven key strategies for success:

(1) Research and write about topics that genuinely interest you.
(2) Start with areas you know well or can master through 2–3 weeks of focused reading.
(3) Set a concrete plan and follow it to complete your paper on schedule.
(4) Read extensively before writing to enhance your ability to critique literature and deepen your subject knowledge.
(5) Write ideas down immediately without worrying about grammar or vocabulary—focus on the main points and edit later.
(6) Efficiently allocate time and resources when managing multiple research projects.
(7) Be strategic in choosing where to publish, considering the paper's quality, and exploring suitable journals and other venues.

Prof. Jihyun Lee Story

"*I diligently read numerous papers to gain proficiency in my research and improve my writing.*"

Prof. Lee, a professor at *Seoul National University*, South Korea's top national university, is renowned for her interdisciplinary research, which has resulted in numerous publications in prestigious international journals. She believes curiosity is the key to successful research, fueling her passion for discovering new insights, uncovering unexpected correlations, and connecting seemingly unrelated elements. Her curiosity drives her choice of research topic, keeping her engaged and motivated throughout the research process.

Prof. Lee emphasizes the importance of regular reading and writing to build the background knowledge necessary for effective research. She credits her scholarly depth to these practices, which help her stay current with trends and refine her ability to use precise terminology. She compares the careful selection of words, even when writing just a paragraph a day, to the slow, deliberate brewing of Dutch coffee. She argues, "The precision with which a scholar uses terminology reflects the scholar's academic caliber."

Another crucial strategy for her is mastering the appropriate methodology, as a weak approach undermines the scientific exploration of a topic and hampers publication chances. Turning curiosity into research output requires a solid methodological skill set. When one is proficient in various methodologies, the path to exploring intriguing questions becomes clear, and with added drive, it leads to successful papers. She compares methodology to language: without a strong grasp of it, it is like having something to say but being unable to express it.

Finally, Prof. Lee highlights the importance of a concise yet impactful introduction as the cornerstone of a strong paper.

Here are Prof. Lee's seven key strategies for crafting a compelling introduction:

(1) Start each paragraph of the introduction with a clear topic sentence that flows logically into the next, creating a cohesive narrative.
(2) Organize and structure the content of each paragraph to ensure smooth flow and relevant details in the introduction.
(3) Briefly discuss the broader context or background of the research topic, highlighting gaps in existing studies and explaining the relevance of your paper.
(4) Clearly state the purpose or objectives of your research, outlining the specific problem you aim to address and what you hope to achieve.
(5) Provide a concise overview of the methodology or approach, briefly explaining why they are suitable for your research goals.
(6) Mention key findings or contributions of your research to generate interest and set expectations for the rest of the paper.
(7) Revise and refine your introduction multiple times, focusing on capturing the reader's attention and offering a clear roadmap for the paper.

Prof. Curtis Bonk Story

"*Life is short: Find kind people who are prompt, positive, and productive and you can trust. And gain their advice and insights.*"

Prof. Bonk is an active researcher and award-winning teacher at *Indiana University* (IU) Bloomington in the United States, known for his prolific publications in various journals and for presenting his work globally. He generously shares a wealth of information on writing and publishing, offering invaluable advice drawn from his extensive experience in research and publishing. (visit: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/c0zf8n0xxbb7cseo7fscl/h?rlkey=ugjvc6zox5p6hs3lg5jokhxms&dl=0).

Prof. Bonk emphasizes the importance of setting clear goals and planning effectively in both writing and publishing. He urges writers to focus on tangible outcomes, such as the number of pages written, rather than just the time spent working. Building confidence and continuously improving writing skills through dedicated practice is essential. He especially advises beginners to seek guidance from senior researchers or mentors who have successfully navigated the publishing process, and he strongly encourages collaboration in both research and writing.

Additionally, he highlights the importance of thoroughly researching and selecting reputable journals for publication, warning against the growing threat of predatory journals.

Below are Prof. Bonk's seven key strategies for success:

(1) Establish a consistent writing routine that suits your style, setting specific daily, weekly, monthly, and long-term goals.
(2) Select reputable journals in your field and avoid predatory ones to protect the quality and reputation of your work.
(3) Focus on expressing your unique voice and arguments, rather than simply aiming to get published.
(4) Build confidence by developing your writing strengths and continually striving for improvement.
(5) Edit and revise your work thoroughly, refining it with each iteration, much like how Beethoven perfected his compositions.
(6) Create an optimal environment, both physical and digital, that makes it easier to begin, sustain, and complete writing.
(7) Organize files meticulously, manage time efficiently, and celebrate small achievements to enhance productivity and keep your writing on track.

Prof. Joo-Young Jung Story

"Continuously write. These small steps will bring significant results."

Prof. Jung is a Korean professor teaching at a private liberal arts college in Tokyo, Japan, and a leading researcher in media and communication studies. She has published numerous influential papers in international journals. Her academic achievement stems from consistent writing habits. She emphasizes the importance of dedicating at least one hour each day to writing, and if daily writing proves difficult, she suggests setting aside one or two full days per week for research and writing. She firmly believes that consistent effort in research leads to greater productivity.

According to Prof. Jung, success in writing and publishing papers comes from focused goals and steady effort. She recommends setting a goal of writing 250 words in English daily—roughly one page of A4 paper—which can substantially aid in drafting a paper. By maintaining this routine, a draft of a journal article can be completed within a month.

Prof. Jung acknowledges that many researchers experience rejection when submitting their work, which can be disheartening. She advises not to take rejections personally but to see them as a normal part of the research process. Instead of feeling discouraged, she encourages accepting the reviewers' feedback, revising the paper, and resubmitting it to another journal. For her, rejection is an opportunity to improve the paper, and even when revisions are requested, she recommends maintaining a positive attitude and making strategic changes based on the feedback.

Here are Prof. Jung's seven key strategies for success:

(1) Setting goals and staying focused are essential for successful paper writing, as research and writing take time.

(2) Start with small goals, like writing 250 words daily, and build up to larger ones, such as completing a draft in one month and gathering peer feedback in three months.

(3) Establish a schedule that works for you and maintain it, as consistent effort is key to effective time management.

(4) Even if time is limited, make small efforts to continue progressing in your writing.

(5) Do not let personal emotions influence you during the submission process; focus on the potential for publication.

(6) Approach revisions strategically, ensuring that key reviewer points are addressed without feeling obligated to make every change.

(7) Take time for hobbies or relaxation, as breaks can boost creativity and productivity in your writing.

Prof. Olaf Zawacki-Richter Story

"*Networking is paramount in academia and for the publication game in particular.*"

Prof. Zawacki-Richter is a renowned expert in open, distance, and digital education, teaching and conducting research at the *University of Oldenburg,* Germany. He has published over 200 papers, chapters, conference papers, and books, and as of October 2024, his work has been cited nearly 11,000 times, solidifying his status as a globally influential researcher.

Prof. Zawacki-Richter acknowledges that the process of conducting research and publishing in international journals can be both exciting and challenging. He emphasizes the importance of strategic planning, networking, mentorship, and teamwork. Having personally benefited from mentorship and networking throughout his academic career, he highlights the value of seeking guidance from senior scholars and building a global collaborative network with peers, junior researchers, and students. He also encourages researchers to remain open to opportunities and recognize the role that luck can play in shaping their academic journey.

Prof. Zawacki-Richter's seven key strategies, focused on both writing and personal growth as a researcher, are as follows:

(1) Build strong mentoring relationships by seeking mentors whose research aligns with yours, providing valuable guidance and increasing your academic visibility.

(2) Create and utilize networking opportunities through conferences, online forums, and collaborations to expand your professional reach and foster joint research projects.

(3) Secure funding and resources, as these not only support your research but also boost your credibility and enable international collaboration.

(4) Foster collaborative teamwork by treating doctoral students or novice researchers as colleagues and creating an environment of mutual learning and growth.

(5) Seize opportunities and luck, embracing unexpected collaborations, invitations, or research presentations to enhance your academic success.

(6) Adapt to change by staying informed on new technologies, methodologies, and trends, and integrating them into your research.

(7) Be persistent yet flexible, recognizing that academic success requires long-term commitment, adaptability, and trust in the process and your colleagues.

Prof. Josep M Duart Story

"*You have to research (and publish) the current problems of the discipline.*"

Prof. Duart, a distinguished professor at the *Open University of Catalonia* (UOC) in Barcelona, Spain, is the editor-in-chief of the top-tier SSCI-indexed journal, *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, co-published by Springer. With a strong academic background that includes a doctorate in pedagogy, he has made significant contributions to the field of education and e-learning.

Prof. Duart is a strong advocate for rigorous, thorough research, stressing that the cornerstone of successful academic writing lies in the quality of the research itself. His core guidance centers on maintaining high standards of excellence and diligence throughout the research and writing process. He emphasizes the importance of addressing current, relevant issues in research rather than revisiting familiar topics. As the long-serving editor-in-chief of an SSCI-indexed top-tier journal, Prof. Duart believes that language should not be seen as a barrier to international publication.

Here are Prof. Duart's seven key strategies for success:

(1) Conduct thorough research before writing, ensuring your paper is grounded in solid research findings, as comprehensive research forms the backbone of a compelling academic paper.

(2) Focus on addressing current issues in your field, offering new insights and contributing meaningfully to ongoing discourse rather than reiterating established knowledge.

(3) Collaborate effectively with co-researchers to enhance the quality and impact of your papers, as teamwork brings diverse perspectives and expertise.

(4) Recognize that language is no longer a barrier, and use available resources to improve your writing, focusing on clear communication even in a non-native language.

(5) Promote your paper widely by leveraging social networks, academic forums, and conferences to increase visibility and open doors to new opportunities.

(6) Believe in the value of your research and writing skills, as confidence in your work will positively influence the quality and impact of your paper.

(7) Embrace feedback from peers, mentors, or reviewers, viewing constructive criticism as a valuable tool for refining your writing and improving your research.

Checklist: Proven Success Strategies from International Publishing Experts

- Pursue topics that genuinely excite you to produce higher-quality work.
- Establish a consistent writing routine, even if it is just a few hundred words a day.
- Read extensively to deepen your understanding and improve your writing.
- Embrace revisions and accept that your first draft will not be perfect.
- Select reputable journals that align with your research, while staying open to other suitable venues.
- Build networks for collaboration and feedback.
- Learn from rejections and use feedback to refine and resubmit your paper.
- Stay persistent and flexible, understanding that publishing is a long-term commitment.

Chapter 3
Will My Paper Be Well-Received Internationally?

Abstract Will my paper capture international interest when I aim to publish it in an international journal? What are the key differences between domestic and international journals? How does preparing a paper for international publication differ from preparing one for a domestic audience? This chapter addresses these questions by providing a comprehensive comparison of domestic and international journals, focusing on language, audience scope, quality standards, and the publication process. It offers practical advice on how to adapt your work for international submission, including strategies for improving its global relevance and impact. By understanding these differences and preparing accordingly, you can significantly improve your chances of successful publication and ultimately gain greater recognition within the international academic community.

An Overview of Key Differences Between Domestic and International Journals

Publication Region and Language

Domestic journals are published within a specific country and primarily use the national language. For example, in Korea, most domestic journals are in Korean, though some are published in English and share characteristics with international journals. International journals, however, can be published anywhere and predominantly feature articles in English, facilitating global scholarly discourse. The number of international journals has been growing exponentially across various regions (Johnson et al. 2018). In the social sciences, many journals are published in China, the USA, UK, Australia, Spain, Korea, and others. Some international journals, such as Spain's Journal of "*Culture and Education,*" publish articles in both English and the national language.

Audience Scope

The target audience varies due to language differences. Domestic journals cater primarily to researchers and academics within the country, focusing on topics relevant to the local research environment. They cover a broad range of issues tailored to the national academic community's interests. In contrast, international journals target a global audience, engaging in scholarly dialogue that transcends national boundaries and offering diverse academic perspectives and issues.

Subject Areas

Domestic journals often concentrate on issues pertinent to national readers and the local research environment. However, in an increasingly globalized research landscape, they also publish papers addressing international issues. International journals inherently embody a global perspective, covering a broad spectrum of topics and research fields. This diversity reflects the international academic community and fosters global scholarly collaboration.

Quality and Impact

There are differences in the perceived quality and impact of domestic and international journals, generally assessed by the indexing services that recognize them. Papers published in international journals indexed by top-tier abstracting and indexing agencies are globally recognized for their academic excellence. The reputation of domestic journals is often evaluated within the national academic community. While papers in domestic journals have high visibility and recognition within the country or region, they may not be as globally influential as those in international journals. However, these journals play a crucial role in their local research communities. In Korea, for example, a journal's inclusion in the Korea Citation Index (KCI) by the Korea Research Foundation is a key indicator of quality. Some high-quality domestic journals are also recognized internationally, and in certain fields, the influence of Korean-language journals may even surpass that of international publications. This situation may be similar in other countries.

International journals are evaluated based on their reputation and impact within the global academic community. Factors such as citation rates, download rates, and visibility contribute to their standing. Papers published in international journals often receive broader recognition worldwide, enhancing an author's reputation and career prospects. As discussed further below, most are indexed by various abstracting and indexing services, which are tiered into top (e.g., Web of Science, Scopus), middle

(e.g., PubMed), and lower levels (e.g., ERIC). The quality of a journal is often determined by the agencies indexing it.

Submission and Publication Process

The submission-to-publication process is similar for both domestic and international journals, but international journals often have longer timelines and more extensive reviews. Domestic journals usually provide clear submission deadlines and detailed guidelines, with peer review conducted by local experts, leading to relatively quick publication decisions.

International journals also require strict adherence to guidelines, with manuscripts initially reviewed by editors and then peer-reviewed by two to three experts from various countries. Decisions include accept, accept with revisions, revise and resubmit, or reject, with feedback provided. Timelines from submission to decision can range from weeks to months, and publication can take several more months. Most journals offer online status tracking and list average submission-to-decision times on their websites.

Determining the Best Fit: Domestic Versus International Journal Publication

When deciding whether to submit your paper to a domestic or international journal, it is essential to consider the characteristics of each option. Selecting the appropriate journal can significantly increase your chances of publication and enhance the academic impact of your work. The following examples illustrate how to make this decision.

Example 1

Suppose your research involves a comparative analysis of AI education curricula in primary and secondary schools across Korea, the USA, China, Germany, and France, examining aspects such as textbooks used, instructional hours allocated, and national educational policies. Consider who would be interested in your findings and who would benefit from them. Given the global relevance of AI and its associated educational policies, an international journal would likely be the most suitable choice. However, if your paper is written in Korean and you need to publish it quickly, a domestic journal might be more appropriate due to its faster publication timeline.

Example 2

Imagine your research focuses on a comparative analysis of the policies of progressive and conservative parties in Korea regarding the Korea–US–Japan alliance. While a domestic journal might seem logical due to the focus on Korean political parties, the international significance of alliance policies suggests that an international journal might be a more fitting option.

Example 3

Consider researching the impact of the Korean Wave on the Korean economy. This topic might initially appear more suitable for a domestic journal. However, if you aim to publish in an international journal, you may need to expand or supplement your paper. For instance, you could broaden the scope to analyze the impact of the Korean Wave on the economies of East Asia or globally or explore the economic effects of soft power with a particular emphasis on the Korean Wave.

    These three examples illustrate that your research can be submitted to either a domestic or international journal, depending on the primary focus of your study and practical considerations, such as publication timelines. The question, "Will my paper be well-received internationally?" can generally be answered affirmatively, as long as your research provides valuable insights and captures the interest of a broad readership.

More on Quality and Impact: Domestic Versus International Journals

The quality and impact of academic journals are often gauged by their inclusion in abstracting and indexing databases. These databases classify and organize journals based on various criteria, evaluating their quality, relevance, and impact, while also facilitating easy access to articles and authors. First, I will explain how this system operates in domestic contexts before examining the specifics of international journals.

Domestic Journal Abstracting and Indexing Databases

Using Korea as an example, the Korea Research Foundation operates the Korea Citation Index (KCI), a domestic abstracting and indexing database. Not all domestic journals are included; only those meeting predefined quality standards are listed. For more information, you can visit the KCI portal. Other countries have similar

systems to KCI, services that evaluate the quality of research products. If you plan to publish your research in a domestic journal, I recommend familiarizing yourself with the country's research system and citation indexing services. International journal abstracting and indexing databases function similarly but on a global scale, offering more extensive services.

International Journal Abstracting and Indexing Services

Several organizations assess the quality and impact of international journals through abstracting and indexing services, which rank journals based on quality and influence. Journals listed in top-tier databases are regarded as having the highest quality and impact. Although ranking methods vary, the following categorization by quality tier is commonly used:

(1) **Tier 1 (Top Tier) Databases**: *Web of Science (WoS)* and *Scopus* are widely regarded as top-tier abstracting and indexing databases. WoS is more selective, while Scopus offers broader coverage. Both platforms are recognized for indexing scholarly literature across various fields, including journals, books, and conference proceedings. To be listed, journals must meet strict selection criteria, ensuring high academic quality, significant impact, and broad readership. For a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between these databases, refer to studies such as Pranckutė (2021), Singh et al. (2021), and Zhu and Liu (2020).

- **Web of Science (WoS)**: Developed by Clarivate Analytics, WoS covers high-quality scholarly literature across disciplines through its key databases: Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED) for physical sciences, Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) for social sciences, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI). It also includes the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) for emerging journals. Publishing in an SSCI journal is highly regarded in the social sciences for its qualitative excellence.
- **Scopus**: Managed by Elsevier, Scopus is the largest abstracting and indexing database, covering a broader range of fields than WoS, including journals, conference papers, trade publications, and patents. It offers wider indexing, including non-English publications, but journals in Scopus are often considered slightly less influential than those in WoS's SSCI.

(2) **Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Databases**: Mid-tier abstracting and indexing services include databases like *PubMed*, *PsycINFO*, and *IEEE Xplore*. While journals in these databases may not receive as much recognition as those in top-tier databases, they maintain high standards and play a significant role in disseminating research within their fields. Publishing your first paper in a mid-tier journal can sufficiently broaden your paper's reach. Notable mid-tier databases include:

- **PubMed**: Primarily supports biomedical and life sciences fields.
- **PsycINFO**: Managed by the American Psychological Association, it includes journals in social and behavioral sciences.
- **IEEE Xplore**: Supports computer science, electrical engineering, and related areas.

(3) **Tier 3 (Lower Tier) Databases**: Lower-tier abstracting and indexing services generally include specialized databases or those limited to a particular institution or region. Emerging journals often start here and gradually move up to mid and top tiers. It is important not to assume that journals listed in lower-tier databases are of low quality. Some may have a high impact and broad readership, especially those from prestigious universities and research institutions. Researchers sometimes choose these journals due to regional importance or to target a specific audience. Starting your first international paper in a lower-tier journal might increase your chances of success. Examples include:

- **ERIC** (**Education Resources Information Center**): A key database in education; each field often has its specialized databases.
- **Regional Databases**: Examples include Korea's KCI, the Australian Education Index, and the British Education Index, all widely used within their respective regions. Some of these indexes also attract international researchers and enjoy a strong global reputation.
- **Google Scholar**: The most well-known academic search engine, covering a wide range of fields. Due to its easy accessibility, it is arguably the most visible and accessible database.

For a more comprehensive understanding of how academic databases function across disciplines and at different tiers, refer to Harzing and Alakangas (2016), which compares three major databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, and WoS.

Abstracting and Indexing Databases for Open Access Journals

Open access journals, which allow anyone to read articles for free online, are also listed in the various tiered databases mentioned above. Additionally, services like the *Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)* specialize in these types of journals, providing a comprehensive database covering a wide range of fields. More details will be discussed in Chap. 6.

Journals Not Indexed in Any Database

International journals not listed in major abstracting or indexing services may face limited visibility and challenges in attracting submissions and readership. While some non-indexed journals maintain high editorial standards and contribute valuable research, they struggle to reach a wider audience and establish credibility within the academic community. Today, most international journals, apart from very new ones, are listed in multiple databases.

Notes on Quality Assessment of Journals

But how can I trust the quality of a journal solely based on the database it is listed in? Are there other factors to consider? I suggest evaluating the following points when assessing the quality of journals, particularly international ones.

(1) **Subjectivity of Tier Assessments**: Evaluating the quality of international journals based solely on their inclusion in tiered databases can be somewhat subjective. The significance of a journal's tier or ranking may vary across different academic fields and geographic regions. For instance, a journal highly regarded in one region or discipline may not hold the same prestige elsewhere. Additionally, certain fields might prioritize specialized or regional journals over broader, higher-tier international publications. Therefore, while databases like WoS and Scopus provide a useful metric, they should not be the only criterion for assessing the quality and impact of a journal. It is important to consider how the journal is perceived within your specific academic community and research focus.

(2) **Multiple Database Listings**: When evaluating the quality of a journal, it is important to consider whether it is listed in multiple databases, as this can be an indicator of its broader recognition and reach. It is common for reputable international journals to be indexed across multiple databases, spanning from top-tier platforms like SSCI and Scopus to mid- and lower-tier databases. For instance, *Computers & Education*, a leading journal in its field, is listed in several databases that reflect its global influence. This inclusion in various databases suggests a wide academic impact and a diverse readership, contributing to the journal's credibility. You can typically find this information in the journal's website, either in the "About" section or under "Abstracting and Indexing." Checking for this across different databases ensures that you are considering journals with strong visibility and scholarly influence within their respective fields.

(3) **Lack of Indexing Information**: When evaluating the quality of a journal, it is crucial to check whether it provides clear information about its abstracting and indexing. If a journal's website does not mention where it is indexed, this could indicate that it is not listed in any recognized database, which may raise concerns about its visibility, credibility, and overall impact. Reputable journals generally

make their indexing information easily accessible in the "About" or "Abstracting and Indexing" section of their website. Journals that are indexed in well-known databases, even if not in top-tier ones, demonstrate a certain level of academic recognition and standards.

(4) **Caution with Predatory Journals**: When evaluating a journal's quality, be mindful that predatory journals may also appear in middle- or lower-tier databases. For example, the *European Journal of Educational Sciences*, listed on Beall's List as a potential predatory journal, claims to be indexed in multiple databases. Merely being listed in a database does not guarantee credibility. Identifying predatory journals requires a more thorough assessment, which will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. Always verify the journal's reputation beyond its database listings.

Evaluating journal quality and impact through abstracting and indexing databases is crucial when deciding where to submit your work. However, as noted earlier, other factors should also be considered. While top-tier databases like WoS and Scopus carry prestige, mid- and lower-tier databases also play a significant role in disseminating research. To ensure your work reaches the right audience and maximizes its impact, always verify a journal's credibility through multiple sources before submission.

More on Publication Process and Fees: Domestic Versus International Journals

The publication process and associated fees for domestic and international journals can differ significantly. Understanding these differences can help you navigate submission systems, avoid unnecessary costs, and make informed decisions about where to publish. There are various ways to outline submission steps, publication fees, and financial models. Based on my experience, here is a breakdown of the typical submission process, fees, and financial models for both domestic and international journals, particularly in the social sciences.

From Submission to Decision

The selection process for international journals generally follows these steps, with domestic journals undergoing similar procedures, though some stages, such as initial desk reviews, may be less common.

(1) **Submission**: Authors submit their manuscripts through an online submission system (or sometimes via email) and register as users of the platform. The submission typically includes the main text, figures, tables, references, supplementary materials, and author information.

(2) **Initial Screening**: The editorial office screens submissions for adherence to formatting, word count, language quality (typically English for international journals), and ethical standards. Manuscripts that do not meet these criteria are often returned for revisions or, in high-volume journals, rejected outright.

(3) **Desk Review (Appraisal by Editor-in-Chief)**: The editor-in-chief evaluates the manuscript for content quality, relevance, originality, and overall suitability for the journal. Many top-tier international journals reject 20–30% of submissions at this stage, without proceeding to peer review, based on these criteria. I have a feeling that this rejection rate is increasing in top journals to reduce the demand on a large number of peer reviewers.

(4) **Peer Review**: Manuscripts that pass the initial screening and desk review are sent for peer review. Typically, two to three experts from different countries assess the manuscript's originality, significance, clarity, and methodology. Reviewers provide recommendations, which generally fall into one of four categories: (1) accept as is, (2) accept with minor revisions, (3) revise and resubmit, or (4) reject. Acceptance rates in top-tier SSCI-indexed journals can be as low as 3–10%. Given the critical role peer reviewers play in maintaining journal quality, publishers provide guidelines and best practices to ensure a thorough and effective review process.

(5) **Revisions (If Needed)**: If revisions are required, authors are given a deadline to address the reviewers' feedback and resubmit. Revised manuscripts may undergo additional rounds of review before a final decision is made. This process can be time-consuming, especially for international journals with rigorous review stages.

(6) **Decision**: Once the revisions meet the reviewers' and editors' expectations, the final decision is made, and the manuscript is accepted for publication. Further steps include formatting and copyediting before the paper is published, either online or in print.

Publication Fees

The fee structure for international journals varies based on their funding models, policies, and access formats. Below are the general approaches to Article Processing Charges (APCs) for international journals:

(1) **Open Access Journals with APCs**: Open access journals allow readers to access articles for free, with authors covering the publication costs through APCs. These fees vary widely, ranging from a few hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on the journal's reputation, field, and services offered.

(2) **Open Access Journals Without APCs**: Some open access international journals are funded by academic institutions, societies, or governments, and do not charge authors publication fees. Examples in my field include *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* and *The International*

Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, both top-tier SSCI-indexed journals funded by institutions such as Athabasca University and the University of Catalonia, respectively.

(3) **Subscription-Based Journals Without APCs**: In subscription-based journals, access to articles is restricted to paying subscribers, and authors are typically not charged any publication fees. These journals are more common in traditional academic publishing models, although many are adopting hybrid models.

(4) **Hybrid Journals**: Hybrid journals allow authors to choose between publishing their articles as open access, with an associated APC, or as subscription-based, where no fee is charged but the article remains behind a paywall. This option gives authors more flexibility in deciding how widely they want their work to be accessible.

(5) **Waivers or Discounts on APCs**: Many international journals offer fee waivers or discounts for authors from low-income countries, early career researchers, or those facing financial challenges. These waivers are usually applied during the submission process, with criteria varying by journal.

Financial Models for Domestic Versus International Journals

Pho and Tran (2016) identify funding as a primary challenge for publication in developing countries. Gaining a clear understanding of the different funding models for domestic and international journals can help you explore potential options for successful publication.

(1) **Domestic Journals**: Domestic journals are typically funded by local academic societies. Society members, often paying annual dues, may publish without fees, though additional costs for page limits, offprints, or manuscript reviews may apply. Research funded by grants usually covers publication fees. Copyright is often transferred to the society, which manages sales and distribution, with financial benefits shared between the society and the publisher, leaving little or no financial gain for the author.

(2) **International Journals**: International journals that do not charge authors are funded by major publishing houses (e.g., Elsevier, Springer Nature) or academic institutions. These publishers cover publishing, marketing, and platform costs in exchange for article rights. Authors may retain copyright in some cases, though it is often transferred to the publisher. Many authors opt for open access journals to retain more control and ensure wider dissemination, though open access often comes with APCs. While traditional models relieve authors from publication costs, they do not provide financial compensation. Open access models, however, shift these costs to authors, enabling broader access. Further details on open access publishing will be discussed in Chap. 6.

Checklist: Key Considerations for Selecting International Journals for Publication

- Ensure the journal aligns with your research focus and offers a global perspective.
- Check if the journal is indexed in reputable databases, enhancing credibility and reach.
- Confirm the journal follows a rigorous peer-review process with international reviewers.
- Verify that the journal engages a global audience and addresses diverse academic perspectives.
- Determine if the journal offers open access options or follows a subscription model.
- Review the fee structure for APCs, and check for waivers or discounts for authors from developing countries or early career researchers.
- Check the average submission-to-publication timeline, as some international journals may have longer processes.
- Clarify whether you retain copyright to your work or if it is transferred to the publisher, especially for open access publishing.

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Chapter 4
Identifying Reputable Journals and Avoiding Predatory Pitfalls

Abstract How can I find reputable journals in the social sciences? What steps should I take to publish in high-impact, top-tier journals? What are the key indicators of journal influence, and how should I interpret them? How can I distinguish between legitimate and predatory journals? This chapter offers a comprehensive guide to finding high-impact journals, breaking down the key indicators of journal influence, and explaining how to interpret them. It provides practical steps for distinguishing between legitimate and predatory journals, ensuring researchers make informed decisions when submitting their work. You will learn how to navigate the complexities of journal indexing, impact metrics, and publication processes, as well as how to avoid the financial and reputational risks posed by predatory publishers.

How to Find Reputable International Journals in Your Field

As a researcher, you likely already have some familiarity with respected journals in your field, particularly if you have been actively reading published papers in international journals. If you already know the name of a specific journal you are interested in, visiting its website to gather detailed information is a direct and efficient approach. However, if you are looking to explore a broader range of journals and assess their quality and impact, especially if you are unsure where to start, follow the steps below to discover which databases index various international journals in your field. However, be flexible and ready to adapt these steps as needed.

Finding Journals Indexed in SSCI

Most researchers are interested in publishing their work in international journals with the highest impact. I certainly am. To locate international journals indexed in the top-tier Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) in your field, follow these steps:

- **Visit the WoS Journal Search Site**: Start by navigating to the WoS journal search page.
- **Search for Specific Journals or Fields**: If you want to know whether a particular journal is indexed in the WoS database, enter the journal's name in the search box. If you do not have a specific journal in mind, type your academic area (e.g., education, sociology, business) into the search box and click "Search Journals" to generate a list of relevant journals.
- **Apply Filters**: Open the "Filters" section on the left, select Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and further refine your search by adding specific research areas, countries, languages, etc. These filters will help you narrow down your options.
- **View Indexed Journals**: The results will display journals in your selected field that are indexed in SSCI.
- **Access Detailed Journal Information**: To investigate deeper, click "View profile page." Here, you can explore the journal's website, publishing history, impact factor, citation metrics, and more. Note that accessing some of this information may require a WoS membership, which you can obtain either through individual registration or via your institution's login.
- **Stay Updated**: Keep in mind that the steps outlined above may change if the WoS site undergoes updates.

Finding Journals Indexed in Scopus

To find journals indexed in Scopus, follow these steps:

- **Visit the Scopus Sources Site**: Go to the Scopus Sources site.
- **Search for Specific Journals or Subjects**: To check if a specific international journal is indexed in Scopus, type the journal's name (Title) into the search box. Alternatively, you can select a subject area to explore broader options.
- **Apply Filters**: Utilize the "Filters" section on the left to narrow down the search results. After making your selections, click "Apply" to display journals indexed in Scopus.
- **Access Journal Details**: Click on a journal's name to view detailed information, including Scopus metrics like CiteScore, SJR, and SNIP (these metrics are explained in a subsequent section).
- **Save Journal Information**: By registering as a Scopus member, you can save detailed journal information for future reference.
- **Stay Updated**: Keep in mind that the steps outlined above may change if the Scopus site undergoes updates, similar to the case with WoS.

Finding Journals Indexed in PsycINFO

As of October 2024, over 2,400 journals are registered in PsycINFO. Although there is no direct search feature to find indexed journals, you can download a comprehensive list from the APA PsycInfo® Journal Coverage List. A similar approach can be used to find journals indexed in other databases by visiting each database's homepage.

The Easiest Way to Find Detailed Information About an International Journal

If you already know the name of the journal where you would like to publish, the simplest method is to visit that journal's website. Look for various critical pieces of information provided there, such as abstracting & indexing, journal metrics, and the typical time from submission to decision.

Additionally, if you are affiliated with a university or another research institution, check the library or research support section of your institution's website. Many institutions offer resources that provide lists of international journals in your field or advice on selecting the best journals for publication.

Understanding Indicators of Influence for International Journals

Have you come across the term "Citation Impact" on a journal's website? Many international journals emphasize their high impact factors, measured through different metrics. When I first entered the world of international publishing, I understood that journals with higher impact factors were generally considered better, but I did not fully comprehend what those metrics truly represented. This section breaks down the various metrics and explains their significance.

Different abstracting and indexing databases utilize various metrics to gauge the influence of the international journals they list. The influence here is closely tied to how frequently the articles within a journal are cited. Simply put, if the articles published in a journal are frequently cited by papers in the same field or across other disciplines, the journal's influence metrics will be high.

Metrics for Journals Listed on WoS

WoS offers the Journal Citation Reports, a valuable resource for evaluating journal influence. This report is accessible via subscription, either individually or through institutional access. It provides key metrics indicating the influence of journals indexed in WoS, such as the Impact Factor, alongside supplementary metrics like the Eigenfactor Score and Article Influence Score. Let's look at each metric:

(1) **Journal Impact Factor (JIF)**: The JIF is the most commonly used metric of journal influence, representing the average number of citations received by articles published in a journal over the past two years. A higher JIF indicates greater influence.
(2) **Eigenfactor Score**: This metric reflects the total influence a journal has within WoS, normalized to 100. A high score suggests that a journal is well-regarded and trusted within the academic community.
(3) **Article Influence Score**: This score is derived by dividing a journal's Eigenfactor Score by the number of articles it has published in the last five years. A score above 1 indicates that the journal's articles are more influential than average, while a score below 1 suggests lesser influence.

Metrics for Journals Listed on Scopus

Scopus provides several indices based on citation data for the journals in its database:

(1) **CiteScore**: Similar to WoS's JIF, CiteScore is calculated based on citations received over the past three years. Higher CiteScore values signify a more influential journal.
(2) **SJR (SCImago Journal Rank)**: SJR measures a journal's prestige by considering how frequently its papers are cited within the Scopus database. A higher SJR denotes a more prestigious journal.
(3) **SNIP (Source Normalized Impact per Paper)**: SNIP compares a journal's impact to the average in its field, making it a useful metric for assessing a journal's influence within specific areas. A higher SNIP suggests greater influence within the field.

Other Important Metrics

In addition to widely recognized metrics, consider the following:

(1) **h-index**: The h-index measures a researcher's academic impact. It represents the number of papers (h) a researcher has that have been cited at least h times, aiming to balance quantity and impact. For example, an h-index of 10 means the researcher has at least 10 papers that have each been cited at least 10 times. A

higher h-index indicates greater academic influence. You can easily find this on a researcher's Google Scholar profile by searching for their name and clicking on their user profile.

(2) **Altmetrics**: Altmetrics measures academic impact based on various online activities. They track mentions of a paper on social media, news outlets, and online discussion forums, providing a broader understanding of a paper or research's impact.

If You Are Still Unfamiliar with These Metrics

Do not worry. Calculating these metrics involves complex analyses of citation rates and journal interconnections, typically handled by specialized software. Your task is simply to compare the impact metrics provided by the international journals of interest and determine whether they are higher or lower than those of other journals. Usually, by clicking on "Journal Metrics" on a journal's website, you can view these indices. Even within SSCI- or Scopus-indexed journals, impact metrics can vary. Let's consider the impact metrics of two journals, as illustrated in Figs. 4.1 and 4.2 within the red boxes. Both journals are indexed in the WoS and Scopus databases.

Figure 4.1 presents the journal metrics for *Distance Education*, published by the global publisher Taylor & Francis, while Fig. 4.2 displays the metrics for *IRRODL*, managed by Athabasca University in Canada, as of October 2024. Now, compare the various impact metrics of these two journals:
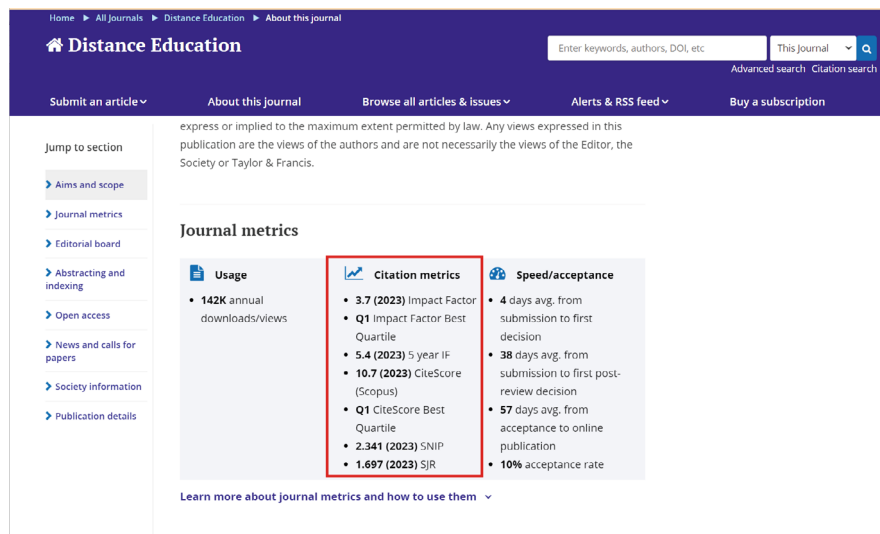
Fig. 4.1 A screenshot of *Distance Education* showing the journal's impact metrics
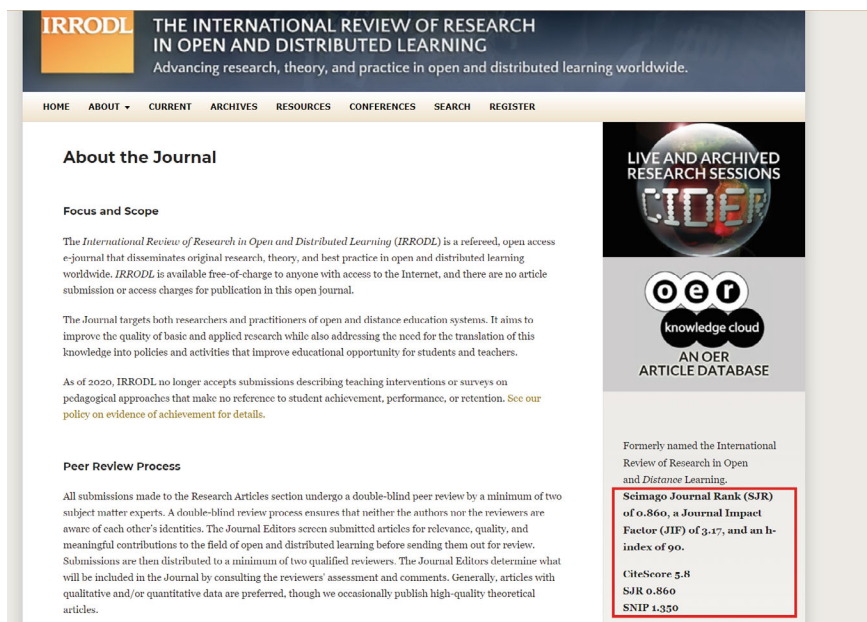
Fig. 4.2 A screenshot of *IRRODL* showing the journal's impact metrics

- The Journal Impact Factor (JIF) for *Distance Education* is 3.7, while for *IRRODL*, it is 3.17.
- CiteScore for *Distance Education* is 10.7, compared to 5.8 for *IRRODL*.
- SNIP for *Distance Education* is 2.341, and for *IRRODL*, it is 1.350.
- SJR for *Distance Education* is 1.697, while it is 0.860 for *IRRODL*.

These metrics show that *Distance Education* has higher impact scores, indicating that papers published in this journal are cited more frequently, both across various academic fields and within the same discipline, compared to those in *IRRODL*. For a more detailed explanation of how to interpret citation impact indicators, refer to Waltman (2016).

Reputation of Online Open Access Journals

Many high-impact journals are available online and as open access. These journals are often indexed in top-tier abstracting and indexing services, though some may also be listed in mid-tier and lower-tier databases. While print journals were historically considered more prestigious, nearly all international journals are now published online. It is important to note that not all online journals are open access; many operate on a subscription basis.

A dedicated database for open access journals is the *Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).* More databases of open access journals will be introduced in Chap. 6. In DOAJ, you can explore a wide range of open access journals. Start by entering a field of interest and clicking "Search" to generate a list of journals. You can then use the filters on the left to narrow down the results and find relevant journals. Detailed information is available by clicking on the journal name.

Domestic Journals Indexed in SSCI

High-quality domestic journals can also be indexed in SSCI. For example, in Korea, you can find such journals on the Korean Citation Index (KCI) site. By entering a field in the search bar and selecting SSCI and other criteria, you can discover journals in specific fields. For instance, a search for "Education" field journals indexed in SSCI revealed one such journal, the *Asia Pacific Education Review*, published by the Seoul National University Education Research Institute. A broader search without specifying a field but selecting SSCI yielded 27 SSCI-indexed journals as of October 2024, most of which are also indexed in Scopus. These high-quality domestic journals are recognized as top-tier international journals. If appropriate, you might consider submitting your papers after reviewing the various metrics and information about journals of this kind in your country.

How to Identify Predatory Journals

Predatory journals, also known as fraudulent, deceptive, or pseudo-journals, prioritize profit over scholarly integrity and the dissemination of knowledge. These journals often charge authors excessive fees while failing to provide proper peer review, editorial services, or adherence to ethical publishing standards (Ojala et al. 2020; Torres 2022). Once you publish in international outlets, you may start receiving aggressive solicitations from these journals, a pattern I have observed with my former students who have published internationally. How can you avoid falling into the trap of predatory journals? By recognizing their common characteristics and understanding the associated risks, you can safeguard your work and ensure it is published in reputable, well-regarded academic outlets.

Key Characteristics of Predatory Journals

(1) **Lack of Rigorous Peer Review**: Although predatory journals may claim to conduct peer reviews, these reviews are often superficial or non-existent. Papers are frequently accepted with little to no assessment of their quality or validity, allowing insufficient or even false research to be published.

(2) **Excessive Publication Fees**: Predatory journals typically charge you high fees for publication without offering corresponding editorial or publishing services. These fees often lack transparency and far exceed the norm for legitimate open access publishing.

(3) **Aggressive Marketing Tactics**: Predatory journals often send unsolicited emails praising your achievements and encouraging submissions. These invitations frequently target early career researchers like yourself with flattering language or promises of rapid publication. Invitations to join editorial boards with minimal qualification checks are another common tactic.

(4) **Low Publishing Standards**: These journals tend to accept papers regardless of their scientific merit or intellectual contribution. As a result, they may publish low-quality, poorly researched, or even unscientific content, which weakens the academic value of the journal.

(5) **Lack of Transparency**: Information about the journal's editorial board, peer-review process, and publishing policies is often vague, incomplete, or exaggerated. Predatory journals may have poorly maintained websites, making it difficult for authors to track their papers. It is also important to carefully examine the publisher—many predatory journals are not backed by reputable or well-known publishers.

Consequences of Publishing in a Predatory Journal

(1) **Damage to Credibility and Reputation**: Publishing in a predatory journal can harm your scholarly reputation. These journals bypass the rigorous peer-review process that lends credibility to research, making your work appear less credible within the academic community.

(2) **Limited Paper Visibility**: Due to the low prestige and questionable standing of predatory journals, papers published in these outlets are less likely to be cited or reach the intended academic audience, limiting the impact of your work.

(3) **Ethical Concerns:** Supporting predatory journals undermines the integrity of scholarly communication. By contributing to these deceptive practices, you may unintentionally compromise the ethical standards of academic publishing.

(4) **Financial Loss**: The excessive fees charged by predatory journals can lead to significant financial losses for researchers, especially when these costs are not matched by legitimate publishing services or academic benefits.

Steps to Identifying Predatory Journals

Verifying the credibility of journals through multiple sources, and consulting with experienced researchers, mentors, or librarians, is essential for making informed decisions about where to publish your work. Below are practical strategies to help you identify predatory journals and avoid the risks associated with them.

(1) **Check the Peer-Review Process**: Avoid journals that accept papers unusually quickly without conducting a proper peer review. Journals that rush the publication process without thorough evaluations often lack academic rigor and may be predatory.

(2) **Examine Transparency**: Avoid journals whose websites lack clear and detailed information about their editorial board or peer-review process. Transparency in editorial practices is essential to ensure the legitimacy and ethical standards of the journal.

(3) **Verify the Publisher's Credibility**: Ensure the journal is published by a recognized global publishing house or a well-known academic society. Additionally, confirm that the publisher is a member of organizations like the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) or the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM). These affiliations are strong indicators of ethical publishing practices.

(4) **Watch Out for Unsolicited Invitations**: Be cautious of journals that actively solicit papers via personal emails or promise rapid review and publication in exchange for high fees. These are common tactics among predatory journals, which prioritize profit over scholarly integrity.

(5) **Scrutinize Fees**: While some legitimate international journals, particularly open access ones, may charge publication fees, predatory journals often demand excessively high or unjustified fees. Such practices are a red flag and should prompt careful investigation.

(6) **Check Indexing and Metrics**: Verify that the journal is listed in trusted scholarly databases like WoS, Scopus, PsycINFO, or DOAJ. Additionally, review the journal's impact metrics and citation indices. Inclusion in respected databases and strong impact metrics are reliable indicators of the journal's academic standing and legitimacy.

Utilize Lists and Resources for Identifying Predatory Journals

(1) **Beall's List**: Although it is no longer actively updated, *Beall's List* compiled by Jeffrey Beall remains a valuable resource for identifying predatory publishers and journals. It provides insight into journals that have been flagged as predatory or unethical. The archive is accessible at https://beallslist.net/.

(2) **Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)**: While DOAJ focuses on listing high-quality open access journals, it indirectly helps identify predatory journals by excluding them. Journals not listed in DOAJ should be approached with caution.

(3) **Open Access Directory (OAD)**: This site provides information about open access (OA) publishing and includes useful discussions on various aspects of open access journals. It can be a helpful resource when evaluating open access journals.

(4) **Think. Check. Submit**: This international initiative aims to guide researchers in selecting trustworthy journals for publication. By encouraging authors to carefully consider their publishing options, the campaign helps improve scholarly discourse and the quality of research dissemination.

(5) **Cabell's Predatory Reports**: Offered by Cabell's International, this subscription-based service provides a curated list of predatory journals and publishers. Researchers and institutions use this tool to identify and avoid potentially problematic journals, ensuring they only submit to legitimate outlets.

I hope that following the steps above and utilizing these resources will help you protect your work from predatory journals and ensure its publication in reputable, well-regarded academic outlets.

Checklist: Key Steps to Identify Reputable Journals

- Evaluate journal impact metrics such as Impact Factor, CiteScore, SJR, and SNIP for academic credibility.
- Review past issues to assess the quality and relevance of published research.
- Consult experienced researchers or mentors for advice on a journal's credibility.
- Verify peer-review rigor and transparency to ensure quality control.
- Check the editorial board and publishing policies for clear and reliable information.
- Investigate publication fees to ensure they are reasonable and transparent.
- Confirm database indexing in trusted sources like WoS, Scopus, or DOAJ, and consult resources like Beall's List or Cabell's Predatory Reports to check for predatory journal warnings.

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Chapter 5
Smart Tools and Ethics: A New Era in Research Writing

Abstract The rise of digital tools for research writing has transformed how researchers work, enabling faster, more efficient production of high-quality papers. This chapter explores the recent advancements in AI-based writing tools, reference management systems, plagiarism detection software, and collaboration platforms, which have revolutionized the writing process. These tools not only streamline tasks like editing and citation management but also require adherence to ethical guidelines to ensure transparency and integrity in academic writing. By examining the impact of these smart tools, this chapter provides valuable insights into how researchers can navigate this new era of research writing while upholding ethical standards set by international journals.

Changes in the Digital Research Support Environment

The digital landscape for researchers has undergone a significant transformation with the availability of free or affordable, easy-to-use smart tools. For me, the following five key types of smart tools have become essential for research and paper writing:

AI-Based Writing Support Tools

AI-integrated tools are now crucial for enhancing research writing. These tools assist with vocabulary generation, improving clarity, suggesting relevant content, and even directly aiding in writing tasks. Tools like ChatGPT have become essential to our research, boosting productivity while ensuring higher quality and consistency in the papers.

Cloud-Based Reference Management Tools

Cloud-based reference management tools, such as EndNote and RefWorks, have revolutionized how researchers organize and manage citations. Unlike traditional software, these tools allow online storage, sharing, and access from multiple devices, offering features like automatic citation generation, PDF annotations, and seamless integration with research databases.

Plagiarism Detection and Originality-Checking Tools

With advancements in technology, plagiarism has become easier to commit, making the need to ensure academic integrity more crucial than ever. As a result, advanced plagiarism detection tools like Turnitin, iThenticate, and Grammarly have become indispensable in maintaining originality and upholding ethical standards in academic work. For me, these tools not only detect text similarity but also provide detailed analyses to help avoid unintentional plagiarism, ensuring confidence in maintaining the originality of my work.

Cloud-Based Collaboration and Storage Tools

Platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Workspace, Asana, Slack, Jira, GitHub, and Dropbox enable collaboration among researchers across the globe. These tools offer real-time collaboration, version control, editing, feedback provision, and efficient data sharing, making collaborative research more streamlined and effective. I cannot imagine conducting collaborative research without the help of these tools.

Customized Content and Writing Guidelines Tools

Personalized writing support tools like Grammarly, ProWritingAid, and the Hemingway Editor help researchers refine their writing style, structure papers more effectively, and adhere to specific journal guidelines. These tools offer insights into language use, readability, and citation analysis, allowing for tailored improvements in academic writing. I use Grammarly alongside ChatGPT as my personalized writing assistant.

To recap, as you navigate the evolving landscape of journal publishing, particularly in international contexts, challenges such as reference management, collaboration, and maintaining originality will arise. The smart tools discussed here will be invaluable allies, enabling you to tackle these challenges efficiently and effectively in your

research and writing endeavors. Let us explore some key smart tools that are particularly useful for paper writing, along with brief mentions of similar tools that offer comparable functions.

ChatGPT—AI-Based Writing Support Tool

ChatGPT (https://chatgpt.com/), developed by OpenA, has become a significant tool in education and research since 2023. As a leading example of Generative AI (GenAI), ChatGPT can generate diverse content forms, including text, images, videos, sounds, code, and 3D designs. It learns from existing online documents and user-provided data, continuously evolving through its training.

ChatGPT is now widely used by researchers for various tasks, including idea generation, prior literature synthesis, data identification and preparation, testing framework determination and implementation, and even results analysis (Xames and Shefa 2023, p. 2). When focusing on writing papers for international publication, ChatGPT can serve as an effective AI-based writing assistant, helping researchers generate ideas and improve clarity and consistency in their writing, while also ensuring ethical use.

I have used the paid version of ChatGPT (as of October 2024, ChatGPT 4.0) for writing and found it highly effective and efficient in refining and improving the quality of my work, elaborating on key points, confirming logical arguments, and more. It has served as an invaluable assistant and editor. In this section, I will briefly share my most up-to-date knowledge and skills as of October 2024. For more details on the opportunities and challenges of using ChatGPT in research and publication, refer to Jarrah et al. (2023) and Xames and Shefa (2023). Keep in mind that ChatGPT, like other AI tools, evolves rapidly, so regular self-training is essential.

Get Started

Here is how to get started:

- If you are new to ChatGPT, consider learning the basics through YouTube tutorials available in English or your local language.
- Visit the ChatGPT website. ChatGPT responds in the language you prompt it in, whether English or your native language.
- Click "For Everyone" and "Start now" to experiment with prompts. Keep in mind that these menu names change frequently. For example, asking it to "Discuss global issues related to climate change" in English will yield several relevant issues. You can then ask it to "Categorize these into three issues," "Elaborate on each issue," "Add real-world examples," or "Translate it into Korean." Engage

with ChatGPT as if you are conversing—it is a fun and interactive process. Refer to Lewis (2023) to further understand conversations with ChatGPT.

- For paper writing, log in and select ChatGPT. Signing up is simple, especially if you have a Gmail or Hotmail account.
- There is a free version of ChatGPT, like ChatGPT 3.5., but for writing international papers, consider subscribing to the more advanced version like ChatGPT 4.o for around 20 USD per month. The subscription can be canceled anytime, and the qualitative differences between the free and paid versions are known to be significant.

Strategic Use of ChatGPT

ChatGPT can be an invaluable tool for researchers, particularly early career and non-native English researchers, when writing papers for the first time. The effectiveness of your interaction with ChatGPT depends heavily on the prompts you provide. The use of prompts will be explored further in Chap. 9, along with relevant examples. In the meantime, here are some general strategies I have successfully used that you may consider adapting:

(1) **Language and Grammar Checks**: One of the most helpful functions is refining an English draft. You can incrementally check and edit for grammar, expression, and logical flow.
(2) **Translation**: ChatGPT can translate from your native language, but always double-check the output or consider using a professional service for journal submissions, as it may sometimes mistranslate your intended meaning or use expressions that are not appropriate for an academic research paper.
(3) **Generating and Revising Ideas and More**: ChatGPT can assist with generating ideas, summaries, bullet points, and more. With well-crafted prompts and follow-ups, it can help enhance or create examples of abstracts and titles, which you can then choose from and refine further.
(4) **Generating Visual Ideas**: ChatGPT (a paid version) can assist you in organizing your study data into clear and structured tables, graphs, or charts. It can also help generate these visuals directly, making it easier to present your results in a visually engaging and accessible format.
(5) **Enhancing Clarity**: ChatGPT can simplify complex ideas, shorten lengthy sentences, and improve consistency and flow in your writing. By identifying awkward phrasing and disjointed sections, it helps make your work more concise and easier to read, especially when explaining complicated or dense concepts.

See Chap. 9 for more details on effective and ethical uses of ChatGPT, along with prompt examples.

AI Writing Tools Similar to ChatGPT

Several tools similar to ChatGPT are widely used, including the following:

- Google Gemini (formerly Bard)—https://gemini.google.com/app
- Microsoft Copilot (formerly Bing Chat)—https://copilot.microsoft.com/
- Jasper.ai—https://www.jasper.ai/

These tools use prompts and offer functions similar to ChatGPT, enabling you to use them effectively without additional guidance. I recommend visiting their websites to explore their features. Personally, I use Copilot alongside ChatGPT to compare responses and refine the expressions in my papers more efficiently.

Strengths and Weaknesses of ChatGPT

ChatGPT has both strengths and weaknesses, underlining the need for your careful verification to ensure the accuracy and reliability of its responses (Giray et al. 2024; Xames and Shefa 2023).

Strengths of ChatGPT include:

- Accuracy and speed: ChatGPT can summarize topics with impressive accuracy and speed by drawing from a vast database of online materials.
- Comprehensive responses: It provides broad, comprehensive answers, particularly for widely acknowledged issues.
- Versatility: ChatGPT can handle a wide range of topics and tasks by utilizing data from the internet and previous user inputs. It continues to improve every day.

Weaknesses of ChatGPT include:

- Lack of deep understanding: The process is purely mechanical, lacking deep understanding or conceptual analysis of topics.
- Unreliable sources: Since ChatGPT pulls content from across the internet, not all references are reliable, and the algorithm does not disclose how it prioritizes sources.
- Limited handling of new topics: The validity of its responses diminishes with new or original topics due to insufficient data.
- Lack of nuanced context: ChatGPT's responses may miss the nuanced context of your research and often omit rare or unique opinions crucial to the topic.
- No precise citations: ChatGPT does not provide precise citations, likely to avoid copyright infringement.
- Vulnerability to misinformation: AI systems like ChatGPT can be misled by false information from social media, potentially leading to misinformation and misunderstandings.

Grammarly—Grammar and Spelling Checker

Grammarly (https://www.grammarly.com/) is a widely used tool for checking grammar and spelling, offering suggestions for improving style and expression. If your university or institution subscribes to Grammarly, you can access the premium version through your institution's platform and receive guidance on its usage. If you prefer to use it personally, a free version is available upon sign-up, with a more advanced version costing around 12 USD per month. Investing in the paid version for a focused month during paper writing can be cost-effective. Many video tutorials are available for beginners, which can save time when getting started.

Strategic Use of Grammarly

Grammarly integrates AI technology to support various features. Here are three main strategies often used in paper writing:

(1) **Grammar and Punctuation Checks**: Grammarly's primary function is to check for grammar and punctuation errors in papers, performing this task more professionally than ChatGPT. Clear and grammatically correct writing is essential for effectively conveying ideas as a researcher. I find Grammarly is particularly useful in correcting subject-verb agreement errors, punctuation mistakes, and other sentence-level issues.

(2) **Enhancing Style and Clarity**: Academic papers typically require a formal, concise, and clear writing style. Grammarly analyzes your writing, suggesting alternative word choices, sentence restructuring, and identifying redundant or ambiguous phrases. These corrections can significantly improve the clarity and style of your paper.

(3) **Plagiarism Checks**: Grammarly offers a plagiarism-checking feature that verifies whether a paper is original and properly cited. By comparing your paper against a vast database of academic and web content, it identifies potential plagiarism. Maintaining academic integrity and honesty is crucial when writing scholarly papers, and performing a plagiarism check with Grammarly before submitting your paper to an international journal is advisable.

EndNote—Reference Management Tool

EndNote (https://endnote.com/) is a powerful reference management tool that helps researchers collect, organize, generate citations, and create bibliographies easily. If your university or institution subscribes to EndNote, you can freely use the advanced version through its platform and receive guidance on its use. For personal use, a free 30-day trial version is available after signing up, after which you can decide whether

to purchase a license. Many video tutorials are available for beginners, and it is recommended to watch them before starting.

Strategic Use of EndNote

While EndNote offers many features, the following four are particularly important for those writing papers:

(1) **Collecting and Managing References**: EndNote streamlines citation management by allowing you to import references from databases, organize them in a personal library, and easily insert citations in various styles (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago). I contend that mastering EndNote saves time in the long run, improves accuracy, and ensures adherence to journal guidelines.
(2) **Annotating PDFs and Taking Notes**: EndNote enables direct PDF annotation, allowing researchers to highlight key sections, add notes, and record thoughts during literature reviews.
(3) **Collaboration and Sharing**: EndNote supports sharing your library with collaborators, ensuring citation consistency across co-authors. Its online sync feature allows access from multiple devices, aiding research across locations.
(4) **Manuscript Matcher**: EndNote's Manuscript Matcher suggests journals based on your paper's title, abstract, and keywords, helping you filter options by impact, publication frequency, and acceptance rates.

Reference Tools Similar to EndNote

Several other tools similar to EndNote can store, manage, and share references. These tools have functions and usage similar to EndNote and offer free versions you can download and use:

- Mendeley: https://www.mendeley.com/
- RefWorks: https://refworks.proquest.com/
- Zotero: https://www.zotero.org/

Turnitin—Plagiarism Checker

Turnitin (https://www.turnitin.com/) is a widely used plagiarism detection tool for verifying the originality of academic papers. Researchers use Turnitin to check for unintended plagiarism, inappropriate citations, or text similarity with existing publications. To use Turnitin, first check if your university or institution subscribes to it, as it is challenging to use it personally or for free, although teachers can access a free 60-day trial.

Strategic Use of Turnitin

Turnitin offers the following key features that assist researchers writing papers for publication in international journals:

(1) **Plagiarism Detection**: Turnitin detects various forms of plagiarism by comparing your paper against a vast database of academic and online content, identifying parts used without proper citation.
(2) **Feedback Generation**: In addition to detecting plagiarism, Turnitin generates feedback reports highlighting issues such as grammar, punctuation, spelling errors, and inappropriate citations. This feature helps improve the overall quality of papers written by researchers.
(3) **Similarity Check**: Turnitin provides a similarity score, indicating the percentage of content in the submitted paper that matches its database. This allows researchers to make necessary adjustments to avoid unintended plagiarism and enhance the paper's originality.

Plagiarism Checkers Similar to Turnitin

While Grammarly also performs plagiarism checks, other tools detect plagiarism and check similarity in academic and research documents. These tools compare submitted content against their databases and provide feedback:

- iThenticate: https://www.ithenticate.com/
- Scribbr: https://www.scribbr.com/plagiarism-checker/
- Plagaware: https://www.plagaware.com/
- Quetext: https://www.quetext.com/plagiarism-checker

Ethical Guidelines for the Use of AI Tools in International Journals

While not all international journals have specified guidelines regarding the use of AI tools like ChatGPT, most are moving in a similar direction. If you use AI tools in writing papers, it is essential to adhere to the following principles and policies:

Transparency and Disclosure

Many journals require authors to disclose their use of AI tools like ChatGPT. It is crucial to disclose where and how AI-based tools were used in your paper. Such tools should not be used to write original content but can support tasks like editing or

translation. This transparency ensures that reviewers and readers are informed about the tools involved in the research process.

Authorship and Contributions

AI tools cannot be credited as authors of papers. Authors must clearly define the role of AI tools in the research process, ensuring that human authorship is maintained. If AI tools assisted with editing (e.g., grammar, translation, punctuation), this should be noted in the Acknowledgments section. For example: "This paper was refined with the assistance of OpenAI's GPT-4o, complementing the human editorial process." Honestly, I am beginning to feel that in the not-too-distant future, AI tools could evolve beyond just being assistants or editors for research papers. Journals might even change their policies and start accepting AI tools as co-authors.

Originality and Plagiarism

Authors are responsible for ensuring that AI-generated content complies with copyright laws and ethical standards regarding plagiarism. Proper citation of materials derived from AI tools is mandatory.

Quality and Validity

Authors must assess the quality and validity of AI-generated content to ensure it meets academic standards. This includes reviewing and editing for accuracy, relevance, and consistency. The final responsibility for the content and writing lies solely with the human author.

Bias and Fairness in AI Tools

When using AI-generated content, authors must address ethical concerns such as bias, fairness, and privacy (Zhou et al. 2024). AI models like ChatGPT are trained on vast datasets that may contain biases, which can lead to content reflecting those biases, affecting fairness and representation. Authors should critically evaluate outputs to ensure they do not perpetuate stereotypes or misrepresent information. Privacy is another key concern, especially when AI systems handle sensitive data. Authors must comply with data protection laws like GDPR to avoid infringing on privacy rights. Lastly, transparency is vital. Authors should disclose when AI tools are

used, maintaining academic integrity, and avoiding misrepresentation of the content's origin.

Examples of Journal-Specific Guidelines

Before submitting your paper, thoroughly review the author and ethical guidelines of the target international journal to ensure compliance with any rules regarding the use of AI-based tools. If the journal does not provide specific guidance, you can refer to the examples below, which outline clear guidelines on the appropriate use of AI tools in academic writing. These examples can serve as a reference to help maintain integrity and transparency in your submission.

(1) **JMIR Publications (Medical Field)**:

- If ChatGPT-generated text is used, it must be clearly marked as originating from ChatGPT, which cannot be listed as an author.
- The extent of ChatGPT's involvement in idea development and writing must be disclosed in the Methodology or Acknowledgments sections.
- Some journals require submitting all original texts from ChatGPT conversations as multimedia appendices during manuscript submission, allowing reviewers and readers to assess the AI's contribution.
- Caution is advised against accepting ChatGPT's output without verification, as it may misunderstand the context or suggest non-existent references. The final responsibility for the content lies with the human author.

(2) **British Journal of Educational Technology (Education Field)**:

- AI-generated content tools like ChatGPT cannot be credited as authors or play an authorial role, as they cannot conduct original research independently or assume typical author responsibilities like copyright ownership.
- Any use of such tools must be thoroughly described in the Research Methodology or Acknowledgments sections.
- The accuracy and proper referencing of AI-generated content are the author's responsibility.
- Tools used solely for spelling, grammar, and general editing are not covered by these guidelines. The final decision on the appropriateness of AI tools in manuscripts rests with journal editors.

To sum up, when using AI tools like ChatGPT for academic paper writing, it is essential to remember that, for now, these tools cannot be credited as authors. Adherence to transparency and disclosure principles is critical. Always review and follow the specific policies and guidelines of the journal to which you are submitting.

Checklist: Tips for Using Digital and AI Tools in Academic Writing

- Familiarize yourself with the functions and limitations of digital and AI tools to maximize benefits and avoid weaknesses.
- Use cloud-based tools to streamline collaboration, feedback, and version control.
- Organize references accurately with reference management tools, ensuring compliance with journal requirements.
- Verify originality using plagiarism detection tools and maintain academic integrity.
- Refine AI-generated content with tools like ChatGPT for formality and precision, while always disclosing AI usage to uphold transparency.
- Critically evaluate AI outputs to ensure accuracy and relevance, and avoid bias.
- Adhere to the journal's ethical guidelines when using AI tools for your writing.

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Chapter 6
Open Access to Scientific Information

Abstract The rapid rise of Open Access (OA) journals is part of the broader "Open Movement," which emphasizes transparency, inclusivity, and free access to knowledge in fields such as science, education, and technology. By removing paywalls, OA journals extend the reach of scientific research to a global audience, encouraging faster idea exchange and fostering equality in information access. This chapter serves as a practical guide for researchers, particularly newcomers, to understand the advantages and challenges of OA publishing. It covers effective strategies for selecting the right OA journal, managing publication costs, and ensuring that your research is accessible without compromising quality, allowing it to reach a wider audience and make a significant impact within the scholarly community.

Keywords Accessibility · Article processing charge · Inclusivity · Open access journals · Open movement · Publication costs · Research visibility

Introduction to Open Access (OA)

What is OA?

OA is a publishing model that allows research outputs, such as journal articles, datasets, and reports, to be freely available to the public without paywalls or other restrictions. The traditional publishing model often limits access to research through expensive subscription fees or one-time payment options, which can hinder the dissemination of scientific information or knowledge, particularly for institutions and individual researchers in developing countries. In contrast, OA removes these barriers, enabling anyone—researchers, practitioners, policymakers, students, and the general public—to freely read, download, distribute, and build upon scholarly work. For these reasons, I firmly believe that OA promotes a more inclusive and collaborative global research environment. The movement for OA began in the early 2000s as a response to the high costs of journal subscriptions, with initiatives like the Budapest Open Access Initiative (Chan et al. 2002) advocating for free access to

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scholarly research. Over time, more institutions and funders embraced OA as a way to ensure that publicly funded research is accessible to everyone, fostering greater knowledge sharing and faster scientific progress.

OA comes in two main types: Gold OA and Green OA. Gold OA means that your article is published directly in an OA journal, and the final version is immediately available for anyone to read for free. Some Gold OA journals charge an Article Processing Charge (APC) to cover the costs of publishing, though many offer financial support or waivers. Green OA means that you first publish your article in a traditional, subscription-based journal. Then, you make a version of the article available in an online repository that is free to access. This is known as "self-archiving." Gold and Green OA work in different ways depending on the publishing and archiving processes, but both options provide free access to research.

In addition to these two types of OA, there are other models to consider. Bronze OA provides free access to articles on the publisher's website, but without an explicit license, limiting legal sharing or reuse. Hybrid OA allows authors to pay an APC to make specific articles OA within subscription-based journals. Diamond/Platinum OA offers fully OA journals with no fees for authors or readers, as publishing costs are covered by institutions or external funding agencies. Each model has its own advantages, and researchers should choose based on their access needs and available funding.

Why OA Matters for Your Research

OA has transformed how research is shared and accessed, providing significant benefits to researchers and society. One of the key advantages of OA is its ability to expand the reach of research by removing paywall barriers that often limit access to well-funded institutions and individuals. OA is particularly valuable for researchers in developing countries, independent scholars, and small institutions that cannot afford costly journal subscriptions.

OA facilitates faster dissemination of ideas across disciplines, regions, and sectors, encouraging collaboration and accelerating innovation. The open nature of OA allows researchers, educators, and policymakers to build on each other's work, leading to real-world applications in fields like healthcare, education, and environmental science. In public health, for example, OA can play a critical role in sharing research on disease outbreaks or interventions, allowing for quicker global responses.

Publishing in OA journals also increases the visibility of your research, leading to more downloads, citations, and potential collaborations. Studies show that OA articles often receive more citations than those behind paywalls (e.g., Piwowar et al. 2018). As you might expect, OA papers in subscription-based journals tend to receive more views and citations compared to closed-access papers. However, it is crucial to carefully select reputable OA journals to avoid predatory publishers,

which often operate openly online but lack rigorous peer-review processes. OA ultimately fosters a more equitable and transparent research landscape, benefiting both individual researchers and the broader scientific community.

Quality of OA Journals

Following the foundation set in Chap. 4 on identifying reputable journals and avoiding predatory pitfalls, this section focuses on evaluating the quality of OA journals and understanding the financial aspects.

Distinguishing Reputable OA Journals from Predatory Ones

As discussed in Chap. 4, identifying reputable journals is essential to protecting your research. In OA publishing, predatory journals pose a significant risk by offering quick publication without proper peer review or ethical standards. Key red flags include aggressive emails, high fees, and unclear editorial processes. In contrast, reputable OA journals are transparent, with established peer-review systems, credible editorial boards, and inclusion in databases like WoS, Scopus, or DOAJ. Verifying these aspects ensures your research reaches a broad audience while avoiding predatory publishers. Refer back to Chap. 4 for more details.

How to Assess the Quality of OA Journals

In line with the guidelines provided in Chap. 4, there are several key factors to assess the quality of an OA journal. Peer review is one of the most important indicators of a journal's academic rigor. Reputable OA journals make their peer-review process clear and transparent. A proper peer-review process means that submitted manuscripts are evaluated by experts in the field, ensuring the research's quality, originality, and relevance.

An additional factor to examine is the composition of the journal's editorial board. A reputable OA journal will have established academics and recognized experts as editors, many of whom you may recognize from your readings. You should review the credentials of the editorial board members and verify that they are well-recognized in your field and actively contributing through publications or other academic activities. This demonstrates that the journal has a strong academic foundation and credibility. If the editorial board is obscure or filled with individuals outside the field, this is an indicator signaling that the journal may not adhere to rigorous academic standards.

Lastly, indexing is another crucial aspect of assessing OA journal quality. Journals indexed in major databases like WoS, Scopus, PsycINFO, and DOAJ have undergone strict selection processes, ensuring that they meet high scholarly and ethical standards. As discussed in Chap. 4, being indexed in respected databases ensures that articles from the OA journal are accessible to a broader audience, increasing their likelihood of being cited and enhancing the visibility and impact of your research.

Recognizing Impact Factors and Alternative Metrics

As detailed in Chap. 4, traditional metrics like Impact Factor (IF), CiteScore, and SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) are widely used to measure a journal's influence based on citation counts. Reputable OA journals often display these metrics on their website. Additionally, Altmetrics offers a broader view by tracking mentions on social media, blogs, and other non-academic platforms. This is especially valuable for OA journals, which aim to make research accessible to a wider audience, reflecting its societal and interdisciplinary impact beyond traditional citations.

Financial and Ethical Aspects of OA Publishing

I have aimed to make my papers and books accessible as open access, even when publishing in subscription-based journals by paying the necessary fees. This approach ensures that individuals, including those without institutional access, can benefit from my work. However, securing the necessary APC fees for OA publishing can be challenging. The following sections will explain the concept of APCs, how they work, and potential funding sources to help you cover these costs.

Understanding APCs and How to Budget for Them

One of the primary financial aspects of OA publishing is the APC. Unlike traditional subscription-based journals, OA journals often charge authors a fee to cover the costs of publishing, including peer review, editing, and maintaining online access to the content. These fees can range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand, depending on the journal's prestige, impact, and services offered, as briefly discussed in Chap. 4.

There are several ways to cover APCs in open access publishing. Many international OA journals, supported by academic societies, universities, or governments, do not charge APCs. Universities and research institutions often offer funds to support OA publishing, which may cover APCs fully or partially. Be sure to check with your institution's research office or library for available funding. Research grants

also frequently cover APCs, and many funding agencies allow these costs in grant applications. Compare APCs across journals and account for these costs in your funding applications or research budgets—a practice I consistently followed when applying for grants. Some OA journals also offer waivers or discounts for authors from low-income countries or early career researchers, so explore these options before submitting your manuscript.

Ethical Considerations Surrounding APCs and Academic Equity

While OA publishing makes research freely accessible to readers, the APC model can raise ethical concerns related to academic equity. Researchers from well-funded institutions or wealthier countries can afford the fees charged by prestigious OA journals, whereas those from underfunded regions or institutions may find these costs too excessive. As Zhang et al. (2022) point out, this financial disparity can limit the diversity of voices in academic publishing and reinforce existing inequalities.

Academic equity is a growing concern, particularly in the context of publishing. To address this issue, some publishers and funding bodies are working to create more equitable OA models, such as Diamond/Platinum OA, where both authors and readers access the content for free, with the publishing costs covered by external funding sources. Additionally, many journals and organizations are expanding their waiver programs and creating tiered pricing models to make OA publishing more accessible to researchers from diverse backgrounds (Rouhi et al. 2022).

By integrating the strategies from Chap. 4 with an understanding of OA publishing's quality and financial aspects, you can make informed decisions that maximize the impact and reach of your research while avoiding the pitfalls of predatory journals.

Key OA Resources and Directories

The OA landscape is becoming increasingly complex. To navigate it effectively, the following resources and directories will help you better understand the OA publishing environment. Additionally, several OA organizations, such as the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA), Coalition of Open Access Policy Institutions (COAPI), Open Access Week, and the Public Library of Science (PLOS), offer comprehensive resources and best practices in OA publishing.

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

DOAJ (https://doaj.org/) is a tool for finding legitimate OA journals, and thus it is a critical resource for researchers looking for reputable OA journals. It includes high-quality, peer-reviewed OA journals across many disciplines. By offering detailed filters, such as subject, language, licenses, and publisher, DOAJ helps you find appropriate journals for your work while avoiding predatory ones. Additionally, it allows you to discover journals that do not charge APCs, which is particularly helpful if you have limited funding. I agree with DOAJ's goal of contributing to the democratization of knowledge by helping researchers identify journals that prioritize transparency and uphold ethical standards.

ISSN ROAD

ISSN ROAD is a global database that catalogs a wide range of OA scholarly resources, including journals, conference proceedings, and repositories. Managed by the International Centre for the Registration of Serial Publications, it plays a crucial role in verifying the legitimacy of OA publications, ensuring that the resources meet international publication standards. You will find ISSN ROAD especially useful when looking to access a broader range of OA materials beyond traditional journals, such as technical reports and white papers. Similar to DOAJ, this platform ensures that the resources it lists are credible, making it easier for you to confidently navigate the evolving OA environment.

Sherpa Romeo

Sherpa Romeo, operated and funded by the UK's Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), is an essential tool for researchers looking to understand the OA policies of various journals. It provides information about whether a journal allows self-archiving of preprints or post-prints and details embargo periods for self-archiving. By clearly presenting different OA models, Sherpa Romeo helps you to make informed decisions about where to publish. You can also use it to compare the copyright policies of different journals, ensuring they retain the rights to share their work.

Institutional Repositories

Institutional repositories are digital archives managed by universities and research institutions, where researchers can self-archive their publications. These repositories follow the Green OA model, offering a cost-effective way to make research widely accessible without paying APCs. Check your institution's self-archiving policies to ensure your research stays freely available, even if published in subscription-based journals. Institutional repositories increase the visibility of your work and help fulfill any OA mandates required by funders.

Balancing OA with Traditional Publishing Models

Pros and Cons

As discussed above, publishing in OA journals offers significant advantages, including increased visibility and higher citation rates due to broader accessibility. OA aligns with the principles of transparency and inclusivity, ensuring that your research is available to a global audience. This can be particularly beneficial for researchers in lower-income countries who may not have access to subscription-based journals.

However, there are challenges associated with OA publishing, primarily the cost of APCs, which can be a barrier for underfunded researchers. Subscription-based journals, on the other hand, do not typically charge authors to publish but limit access to readers with paid subscriptions. This can reduce the visibility of your research and may restrict its impact. Consider the pros and cons of OA versus subscription-based journals when selecting the best journal for your work.

The hybrid publishing model can be a choice for publishing your work if you have funds for paying APC. It allows you to make specific articles open access within a subscription-based journal by paying an APC. While this offers flexibility, hybrid journals often come with high APCs, and only selected articles are open access, limiting the broader impact of the journal's content. You need to weigh the benefits of hybrid publishing—such as the journal's prestige and the broader reach of OA— with the potential costs. Additionally, be aware that hybrid journals contribute to so-called "double-dipping," where institutions or researchers pay both subscription fees and APCs to make articles OA, leading to unnecessary financial strain.

Long-Term Career Impacts of OA Publishing

Choosing OA publishing can have both positive and negative effects on your career as a researcher. On the positive side, publishing in OA journals increases the visibility

of your work, which can lead to higher citation rates and greater recognition. This is particularly advantageous for early career and non-native English researchers aiming to establish themselves globally in their field.

However, in certain countries or fields, some OA journals may not be regarded with the same prestige as subscription-based ones, potentially affecting how your work is viewed in promotion or tenure evaluations. That said, the growing use of alternative metrics and the improvement of journal impact indicators are helping to enhance the reputation of OA journals.

Checklist: Considerations for Open Access Publishing

- OA removes paywalls, providing free global access to research.
- OA models like Gold, Green, and Hybrid offer different access levels and costs.
- OA boosts visibility, leading to higher citations and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Reputable OA journals maintain transparent peer review and are indexed in major databases like DOAJ.
- APC costs can be covered through grants, institutional funding, or waivers.
- Challenges include lower prestige in some fields and the financial burden of APCs for unsupported researchers.

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Part II
From Journal Selection to Writing and Submission (A 15-Week Guide)

Chapter 7
Week 1: Choosing Your Journal and Understanding Guidelines

Abstract   After laying the foundation in previous chapters, selecting the right journal is the next critical step in your research journey. Choosing an appropriate journal not only guides your preparation but also significantly enhances your chances of recognition and acceptance by experts in your field. This chapter provides essential steps for identifying the best journal for your research, aligning your paper with the journal's scope, interpreting author guidelines, and selecting an international journal suited to your work. By understanding how to evaluate journal tiers, impact, and relevance, you can strategically increase the chances of your research reaching the right audience and achieving publication success. Once you grasp this process, selecting the right journal becomes easier and quicker—eventually, you will not need to meticulously follow the steps outlined in this chapter each time.

Understanding Your Research

To select the optimal journal for your paper, start by objectively evaluating your research's significance, impact, and quality. By addressing the following questions, you will gain deeper insights into your work, helping you identify the most appropriate journal types and tiers.

What Are the Focus and Scope of Your Research?

Begin by clearly outlining the core themes and scope of your research to establish its primary focus and objectives. Next, create a list (List 1) of journals that regularly publish articles on topics closely related to yours. These journals can be identified by reviewing the literature from previous studies that address similar research areas.

Additionally, consider journals that match the specific context of your research, such as elementary and secondary education, higher education, adult education, or government and international organizations. For example, if your study focuses on university students, avoid journals that primarily cover elementary or secondary education. Instead, choose journals that target higher education or adult learners. Be sure to include a mix of top-tier, mid-tier, and lower-tier journals in List 1 to broaden your submission opportunities.

(1) **Steps to Create List 1**:

- Identify key themes and scope: Outline the specific area your research focuses on and look for journals that align with these themes.
- Prioritize relevant journals: Search for journals that frequently publish similar topics, paying attention to their tier (top, mid, or lower).

Next, create a second list (List 2) of journals that are relevant to your research even though they do not regularly publish similar papers. For example, in a study titled "*A comparative analysis of factors affecting the mental health of high school students in the US, Japan, and Korea,*" List 1 would include journals in closely related fields such as psychology or educational psychology. Meanwhile, List 2 might feature journals from adjacent disciplines like comparative education or secondary education.

(2) **Steps to Create List 2**:

- Expand to interdisciplinary fields: Identify journals that may not traditionally publish your topic but are still relevant due to their broader or adjacent focus.
- Check for special issues: Look for journals that may accept your paper in special or thematic issues, even if it is not their regular focus.

What Is the Novelty or Originality of Your Research?

Most journals, especially top ones, often reject submissions lacking novelty or originality during the desk review or peer-review process. Research on well-established topics or offering no new insights is frequently dismissed by prestigious publications. In contrast, papers exploring emerging topics or providing fresh perspectives on familiar issues tend to draw more attention and stand a greater chance of acceptance. For example, introducing a novel approach to a widely discussed problem or investigating a new research area can capture the interest of editors and reviewers.

So, how can you ensure the novelty or originality of your research? While this guide does not focus on that question, I would like to share three strategies that have worked for me. For a detailed explanation of research novelty and originality, refer to books on research design such as Creswell and Creswell (2022) and Leavy (2022).

- Conduct a literature review: Analyze past studies to identify gaps and ensure your research offers something unique. Highlight how your findings differ from previous work to demonstrate originality.

- Adopt innovative methodologies: If your topic is well-established, bring novelty by applying new methods or refining your focus to present fresh perspectives or solutions.
- Assess your contribution: Critically evaluate how your research advances the field. Seek peer feedback to identify its most novel and valuable aspects, focusing on meaningful advancements or addressing key gaps.

If your research contains original or innovative elements, highlight the top- and mid-tier international journals from Lists 1 and 2 to form List 3. If your research offers limited novelty or originality, focus on lower-tier journals from Lists 1 and 2 to create List 4.

(3) **Steps to Create List 3**: For strong novelty or originality

- Select top-/mid-tier journals from Lists 1 and 2.
- Check for innovation focus in past issues.
- Prioritize high-impact journals for visibility.

(4) **Steps to Create List 4**: For limited novelty or originality

- Pick lower-tier journals from Lists 1 and 2.
- Target journals open to studies with modest contributions.
- Consider high acceptance rates and quicker timelines.

Is Your Research Methodology Robust?

Methodological robustness varies by field. For example, surveys are common in sociology, but in education or psychology, a survey alone may not meet top-tier journal standards unless it offers a novel perspective. In psychology, leading journals often expect multiple related studies rather than a single experiment. However, if your methodology is strong, particularly with innovative data analysis, your chances of acceptance increase.

Carefully review your research design, methodology, data collection, and analysis to ensure they are appropriate, reliable, and valid. Reference books like Creswell and Creswell (2022) and Leavy (2022) can guide you in evaluating the strength of your methodology. This thorough assessment will help you gauge its overall robustness.

- If your research is original and your methodology is strong, select journals from List 3 that match your research approach and compile them into a new list (List 3-1).
- If you are unsure about the originality or adequacy of your methodology, it is safer to opt for journals from List 4, creating List 4-1.
- However, if your research is innovative but the methodology may not be as robust, review both Lists 3 and 4, focusing on mid-tier or lower-tier journals, and create a new combined list, List 3/4-1.

This strategic approach increases your chances of targeting journals that align well with the strengths of your research while accounting for any methodological limitations.

(5) **Steps to Create List 3-1**: Strong originality and methodology

- Select journals from List 3 that align with your research approach.
- Prioritize journals with rigorous methodology standards and high relevance to your research focus.
- Compile List 3-1 by narrowing down journals that best match both your originality and strong methodology.

(6) **Steps to Create List 4-1**: Uncertainty in originality and methodology

- Choose journals from List 4 that accept research with less emphasis on originality or methodology.
- Focus on lower-tier journals that accommodate research with more modest contributions or methodologies.
- Compile List 4-1 by identifying journals that offer a higher likelihood of acceptance.

(7) **Steps to Create List 3/4-1**: Innovative research, weaker methodology

- Review both Lists 3 and 4, targeting mid- and lower-tier journals.
- Focus on journals open to innovative work but that may be more flexible with methodological rigor.
- Create List 3/4-1 by combining journals that fit both innovation and more lenient methodological standards.

Who Is the Intended Audience for Your Research?

To select the most suitable journal for your paper, it is important to identify the potential readers who are most likely to engage with and cite your research (Salmons and Kara 2020). Consider whether your target audience consists of scholars within your discipline, policymakers, practitioners like teachers or industry experts, or a broader, more general readership. Once you have defined this audience, create a new list (List 5) from Lists 3-1, 4-1, or 3/4-1 that aligns with your target readers.

Next, decide whether you want to reach a broader audience via an Open Access (OA) journal or target a more specialized readership through a traditional subscription-based journal. OA journals offer greater visibility and accessibility, but they often require an Article Processing Charge (APC). At this stage, check if your institution or funding agencies cover APCs for OA publishing. Take all these into account as you refine your selection, and compile a new list, List 6, to track suitable OA journals that match your research goals. In my case, I actively support the OA movement by publishing in OA journals whenever possible. When funding permits,

I cover publication fees to increase accessibility and share knowledge more widely. For further details on OA journals, see Chap. 6.

(8) **Steps to Create List 5**: Audience-focused journals

- Identify your target audience.
- Select journals from Lists 3-1, 4-1, or 3/4-1 that align with your intended readership.
- Compile List 5 based on the journals that best match your audience.

(9) **Steps to Create List 6**: OA journals

- Determine if open access suits your goals (broader reach, wider accessibility).
- Select OA journals from Lists 3-1, 4-1, or 3/4-1 that offer visibility, and compare APCs across different journals.
- Compile List 6 of suitable OA journals.

Evaluating the Reputation and Impact of Listed Journals

Now, you have reached the stage where you need to thoroughly investigate the impact factors of the international journals listed in List 5 or List 6.

Checking Journal Impacts and Predatory Journals

Ensure that your list contains no predatory journals. Visit each journal's website to check metrics such as JIF, CiteScore, SJR, SNIP, or Eigenfactor Score, which measure the impact of the journal and its publications. However, do not rely solely on rankings—choose journals that are relevant to your research and align with the originality and methodological strength of your work. Aim to list 3–5 suitable journals in a new list, List 7, considering the submission rankings. For more information on journal quality indicators, impact factors, and predatory journals, refer to Chap. 4 of this guide and other sources such as Laine and Winker (2017).

Consulting Experienced Colleagues for Recommendations

Seek feedback from experienced researchers to refine your journal list and ensure alignment with field standards. They may also recommend better-suited journals. Additionally, attending conferences and workshops can provide insights into publishing trends, emerging journals, and submission strategies, while networking with peers and editors may open doors to new opportunities.

Exploring Publisher Tools

There are several tools available to help you identify the most appropriate journals for your paper. One option is the Manuscript Matcher feature in EndNote, as introduced in Chap. 5 of this guide, which analyzes your manuscript and suggests potential journals based on the content of your work. I personally enjoy using the journal recommendation tools provided by many global publishers, each designed to help you identify the most suitable publication outlet:

- **Sage's Journal Recommender**: This tool suggests journals from Sage's extensive database, aligning with your research focus and manuscript details.
- **Elsevier's Find a Journal**: This feature helps you identify appropriate journals within Elsevier's vast network by comparing your paper's abstract and keywords to their database.
- **Wiley's Wiley Find Journals**: Wiley's tool analyzes your manuscript and suggests relevant journals, considering factors such as subject area, journal scope, and indexing.
- **Taylor & Francis's Journal Suggester**: By entering your manuscript title, abstract, and keywords, this tool recommends suitable journals from Taylor & Francis's broad range of academic publications.

These tools offer journal recommendations at various levels of impact and specialization, making it easier for you to choose a publication venue that matches the quality and focus of your research. It is definitely worth trying.

(10) **Steps to Create List 7**: High-impact and reputable journals

- Evaluate journal impact factors (JIF, CiteScore, SJR) from List 5 or List 6.
- Ensure the journals are credible and avoid predatory journals.
- Update the list with recommendations from peers or publishers.
- Compile List 7 of 3–5 reputable journals for submission consideration.

Examining Publishing Guidelines and Requirements

All reputable international journals provide detailed publishing guidelines and requirements for authors through their Author Guidelines or Submission Guidelines menus. Read the guidelines of each journal in List 7, paying attention to their general instructions, goals, scope, types of articles accepted (e.g., original research, reviews, case studies, etc.), and required word count or format. Here are some considerations I typically keep in mind when selecting a journal:

Journal Goals

Ensure the journal's goals align with your research keywords. For example, if your paper focuses on "Changes in mental health and academic attentiveness among elementary students before and after COVID-19," prioritize journals mentioning terms like COVID, elementary students, and mental health. If none match, rank the journal lower. As Belcher (2019, p. 113) notes, choosing the right journal improves acceptance chances and ensures your research reaches the right audience.

Word Count

Check the word count limit. Most journals accept 5000–6000 words, though some allow up to 8000. Qualitative studies often require higher limits. Be cautious of journals with no or very high word limits, as they may be predatory. For first-time authors, longer limits can be useful when converting a dissertation into a paper. Always verify the journal's credibility.

Processing Speed

Check the journal's processing speed, usually listed on its homepage or About page. Prioritize journals with shorter timelines if speed is important. For example, fast journals may take one month for the first review and two to three months for publication confirmation. If speed is not a priority, this factor can be less significant.

Acceptance Rate

Finally, check the journal's acceptance rate, usually found in the Journal Metrics or on the journal's website. Based on my experience as an editorial board member of several international journals, top-tier SSCI-indexed journals often have acceptance rates as low as 3–20%, while journals in other tiers typically have acceptance rates around 40–50%. This can help you prioritize journals for submission.

Tailor these considerations to your situation, and thoroughly review publishing guidelines before ranking the journals in List 7.

(11) **Steps to Pick a Journal for the First Submission**

- Review journal guidelines and align journal objectives with your research.
- Prioritize journals with faster review times if needed.
- Balance acceptance rates with competitiveness.

- Considering all the factors mentioned above, choose the most suitable journal from List 7 for your first submission. Keep in mind that you can only submit your paper to one journal at a time.

Adhering to the Author Guidelines of International Journals

Once you select a journal, it is essential to carefully follow the Author Guidelines or Submission Guidelines throughout the writing and submission process. Below are key points to consider while reviewing your selected journal's guidelines:

Registration

Before submitting your paper, you must first register as an author with the selected journal through its submission platform. This allows you to access submission features and track your manuscript's progress.

Obtaining an ORCID ID

Visit the ORCID website (https://orcid.org/) to create your ORCID ID, a unique identifier that distinguishes you as a researcher and ensures accurate attribution of your work. Many journals require an ORCID for paper submission, as it increases the visibility and transparency of your academic activities.

Reviewing Author Guidelines

Thoroughly read the Author Guidelines to ensure compliance with the journal's requirements. Pay special attention to the following aspects:

- Article types: Ensure your paper fits the journal's accepted submission types (e.g., original research, review articles, case studies).
- Manuscript submission: Confirm your paper has not been published or submitted elsewhere, and ensure approval from co-authors and institutions. Review copyright and submission policies.
- Title page: Include a separate title page with authors' names, affiliations, contributions, abstract, keywords, and relevant declarations (e.g., conflicts of interest, funding).
- Manuscript formatting: Follow the journal's formatting guidelines, using provided templates if available. Pay attention to font, margins, and specific formatting rules.

- References: Adhere to the required citation style (e.g., APA, MLA) and only include references cited in the manuscript. Use reference management software for consistency.
- Tables, figures, and images: Ensure all visuals comply with the journal's formatting standards and are cited in the text. Secure permissions for copyrighted materials.
- Data policy: Check the journal's data-sharing requirements and ensure compliance, including any necessary data availability statements or repository deposits.

Ethical Responsibility

Adhering to ethical standards is vital to maintaining the integrity of academic research. Keep the following ethical principles in mind during the submission process:

- Originality: Submit only original work, not under review elsewhere. Duplicate submissions or plagiarism can lead to rejection or retraction.
- Transparency: Clearly state how your current work builds on previous research. Avoid dividing one dataset into multiple smaller publications (salami slicing).
- Integrity: Report findings honestly, without data manipulation or selective reporting. Acknowledge any limitations or biases.
- Plagiarism: Properly cite all sources and avoid self-plagiarism. Obtain permissions for any copyrighted materials or tools used.
- Authorship: Credit all contributing authors and ensure the author list is accurate at submission. Any changes must be communicated with a valid reason.

As Sun Tzu said in The Art of War, "*Know your enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster*." In academic publishing, this means understanding both your research strengths and the journals' traits to greatly improve your chances of successful publication.

Checklist: Key Steps for Journal Selection

- Select a journal that aligns with your research theme and scope.
- Create two lists: one for journals regularly publishing similar research, and another for adjacent or interdisciplinary journals.
- Assess your research's originality to identify suitable journals.
- Define your target audience and find journals that fit.
- Decide if open access is suitable and consider relevant journals.
- Finalize your list of 3–5 potential journals based on impact factors and avoid predatory outlets.

- Select the most suitable journal from the list of potential options after thoroughly reviewing each journal's submission guidelines.

References

Belcher, W. L. (2019). *Writing your journal article in twelve weeks: A guide to academic publishing success.* University of Chicago Press.

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Chapter 8
Week 2: Building a Solid Structure for Your Manuscript

Abstract In this chapter, you will develop the framework for your research paper, building on the journal selection process discussed in Chap. 7. This chapter emphasizes the importance of creating a coherent and adaptable structure tailored to either quantitative or qualitative research. While the core components—Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion—must follow standard guidelines, this chapter guides you in tailoring these sections to enhance clarity, coherence, and overall flow of your paper. Special attention is given to differentiating the structural needs of quantitative versus qualitative research. By understanding these distinctions, you can confidently craft a well-organized manuscript, setting a strong foundation for your writing process.

Keywords Manuscript structure · Qualitative manuscript · Quantitative manuscript · Research design · Results · Scholarly writing

Essential Tips for Organizing a Quantitative Manuscript

In the social sciences, quantitative research involves the systematic investigation of human and social phenomena through statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. If your research is quantitative, you likely employed structured methods—such as experiments, surveys, or observations—to collect numerical data, which you then analyzed objectively to identify patterns, relationships, or trends. Then how should you structure your paper to effectively present this kind of quantitative research?

Start with a Standard Structure

If this is your first time writing an international research paper, a standard, concise structure is recommended. Table 8.1 provides a basic outline that you can follow,

Table 8.1 Quantitative paper structure and suggested word count for a 6000-word manuscript

Section	Suggested word count (% of Total)
Introduction (including Literature Review)	About 1200 words (20)
Methods	About 900 words (15)
Results	About 1200 words (20)
Discussion	About 1200 words (20)
Conclusion	About 300 words (5)
References	About 1200 words (20)

especially if your study is quantitative. As you gain experience, you will learn to adapt this structure to better fit the nuances of your specific research.

Allocate Word Count Wisely

Let's say your target journal has a word limit of 5000–8000 words. Aiming for 6000 words for the main text allows some flexibility for revisions later on. Titles, abstracts, and keywords might take up about 200 words, leaving 5800 for the main sections. To assist with planning, Table 8.1 provides a suggested word count and percentage allocation for each section of a 6000-word paper, based on my experience. While these allocations are flexible, they provide a useful starting point. For instance, if your Methods section only requires 700 words, you can extend the Introduction and Literature Review. Similarly, you can adjust the length of the Discussion and Conclusion sections based on your specific needs. In general, it is advisable to keep the References section under 1200 words (20%), with around 50 references. If your total word count increases, adjust each section proportionally. By following these guidelines, you can divide a lengthy paper into manageable sections, allowing for incremental progress and easing the challenge of tackling the entire document at once. As you complete each section, you can reward yourself and celebrate the accomplishment, as mentioned in Chap. 1. Ultimately, this approach will help you craft a well-structured and organized manuscript that effectively communicates your research findings.

Determine the subheadings and content flow for each section. While this may vary depending on the specifics of your research, if you are drafting your first international paper, following the suggestions below will help you establish a concise and logical structure. Lee and Jung's (2021) open access paper may be helpful in understanding the basic structure of a quantitative paper.

Basic Structure of a Quantitative Manuscript

Introduction

The introduction serves as the starting point of your paper and is crucial for setting the overall tone and effectiveness of your manuscript, as emphasized by one of our international stars, Prof. Jihyun Lee, in Chap. 2. As the first section readers encounter, the introduction must be logically structured and persuasive.

In theses or dissertations, the Introduction and Literature Review are often separate chapters. However, in journal papers with word limits, it is not uncommon to incorporate the Literature Review into the Introduction. For first-time authors, integrating the Literature Review into the Introduction can help avoid redundancy between the two sections.

The Introduction should be organized into four main subsections. If you are aiming for around 1200 words (20%) for a 6000-word paper, allocate the word count across the sections based on the specific features of your research. Generally, the Background and Theoretical Framework sections are more detailed, while the Research Gap and Research Objectives sections are more concise.

(1) **Background**: This section provides an overview of the existing literature and context for your study. Start by discussing key studies related to your topic, highlighting significant findings, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks. Summarize their contributions and limitations to position your research within the broader academic conversation, showing how your work builds on or challenges existing knowledge. To enhance clarity, consider using subheadings, particularly if your research covers multiple areas or involves complex topics. Subheadings provide a clear structure and help guide readers through the logical flow of your argument. Personally, I often use subheadings while drafting, and if they seem unnecessary later, I simply remove them. This approach allows for better organization during the writing process without committing to keeping every heading.

   Cite a broad range of studies, including foundational and recent research, to demonstrate the depth of your engagement with the literature and to establish your study's credibility. The goal is to create a well-rounded background that identifies existing knowledge and the gaps or questions your research needs to address. Three essential points to keep in mind are:

   - Review key studies.
   - Identify and discuss limitations.
   - Use subheadings for clarity and better organization.

(2) **Research Gap/Problem**: Discuss the specific gaps, limitations, or methodological flaws in the existing studies discussed in the Background section. These gaps could include unexplored areas, inconsistencies, or shortcomings

in previous research methods. Highlighting these gaps is crucial to demonstrate the necessity of your study.

Cite relevant studies to support your points, showing how your research will address these unresolved issues or gaps and contribute to the field. Three essential points to keep in mind are:

- Identify gaps or inconsistencies.
- Highlight methodological flaws.
- Justify the need for your research.

(3) **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**: This section provides the foundational lens through which your research is conducted and interpreted. Clearly explain the theoretical or conceptual model that supports your study, relating it directly to the gaps or problems you have identified. Introduce the key concepts of the theory or model, and justify its relevance to your research. This framework will guide your data collection and analysis, ensuring your study is systematically grounded in existing knowledge. Three important points to keep in mind include:

- Explain key concepts of your theoretical framework
- Justify the relevance of the framework to your research.
- Use the framework to guide your study.

(4) **Research Questions/Hypotheses/Objectives**: Based on your theoretical or conceptual framework, articulate your research questions, hypotheses, or objectives. These should directly address the research gaps, be clear and specific, and align with your study's goals. You may pose specific research questions to explore new insights or understand complex phenomena. Alternatively, you can state clear and measurable objectives that your research aims to achieve. If applicable, formulate testable hypotheses or predictions about the relationships between variables. Three key points to keep in mind are:

- Align your research questions with the identified research gap.
- Be clear and specific when writing your research questions.
- Formulate testable hypotheses (if applicable).

Methods

The Methods section details the methodology of your research and is typically advised to stay within a 900-word limit (15%) for a 6000-word paper. Your goal is to describe the key elements clearly and concisely so that another researcher can replicate your study. You do not need to include information that is already well-known to researchers.

Typically, the Methods section is divided into four subsections: Research Design, Participants, Instruments/Measurements, and Data Collection and Analysis. These subsections can be adjusted based on the specifics of your study. In this example

paper by Lee and Jung (2021), for instance, some adjustments were made to fit the research.

(1) **Research Design**: Briefly describe the research design used in your study, such as experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlational. Explain why and how this design was chosen. If the design is evident from other sections, you may omit this explanation.
(2) **Participants**: Detail how participants were recruited, their number, and key characteristics. This section may also include demographic information obtained from surveys.
(3) **Instruments/Measurements**: Describe the tools used for data collection, including their development, validity, and reliability. Key items should be explained, and full instruments can be included in an appendix.
(4) **Data Collection and Analysis**: Outline the data collection process, including the timeline, participants, and methods used. Explain how the data was analyzed, specifying the tools and techniques applied.

Results

This section presents the results from your data analysis and is generally recommended to be within the 1200-word limit (20%) of a 6000-word paper. It is effective to structure the Results section according to the research questions, hypotheses, or objectives that are listed at the end of the Introduction section. For example, in this quantitative paper example by Lee and Jung (2021), the Introduction ends with two research questions, and the Results section is organized under two subheadings, each addressing one of those questions. I do not recommend structuring the Results section by types of data analysis (e.g., survey analysis, interview analysis), as this approach does not directly provide answers to the research questions. The process of writing the Results section will be explained in greater detail in Chap. 15. Three essential points to remember are:

- Align the structure of the Results section with your research questions.
- Utilize subheadings to enhance clarity.
- Avoid organizing the Results section based on data analysis methods.

Discussion

In this section, you interpret the results presented in the previous section, typically within a 1200-word limit (20% of a 6000-word paper), while considering the theoretical framework and research questions or hypotheses. You should compare your findings with related studies, both those referenced in the Introduction and any relevant new ones. The Discussion section is where your ability to analyze results, showcase creativity, and demonstrate a deep understanding of the topic truly stands out. I truly

enjoy writing the Discussion section because it allows me to blend creativity with my solid scientific knowledge.

Depending on the discussion points, you can add subheadings or, as shown in Lee and Jung's (2021) paper, present the discussion without subheadings, following a logical flow from paragraph to paragraph. If it is your first time, it might be easier to add subheadings for each point of discussion. When writing the Discussion section, consider the following:

- Start by restating the research purpose. The first paragraph typically provides a brief recap of your study's aim without going into too much detail.
- Present key overall findings. Highlight a few key overall results of the study to set the context for deeper analysis.
- Discuss expected results by elaborating on those that met your expectations or aligned with previous studies. Ensure you avoid repeating content already covered in other sections.
- Examine new or unexpected findings. Highlight results that differ from prior research or were unexpected, offering multiple perspectives on the possible reasons behind these outcomes.

Conclusion

The Conclusion section is where you wrap up your paper. A conclusion typically consists of about three paragraphs and is recommended to stay within a 300-word limit (5%) of a 6000-word paper. There is no need for subheadings in the conclusion, nor is there a need to repeat and summarize the research results. If the contributions and limitations are addressed in the Discussion, the paper can conclude with a single paragraph of concluding remarks. The Conclusion section typically includes three key components:

(1) **Contributions**: Highlight the new and unexpected findings of your study, focusing on the theoretical, conceptual, or academic contributions made to the field. If relevant, discuss the potential practical or policy implications of your findings.
(2) **Limitations and Future Research**: Acknowledge the limitations of your study, and provide suggestions for future research directions or methodologies that could address these limitations.
(3) **Final Remarks**: Conclude with a strong, persuasive summary of your main results, emphasizing their significance and the broader impact of your research.

References

List the references used in the body of your research paper according to the citation style required by the journal. Since references are often included in the total word

count of the paper, it is recommended to keep the reference section under 20% of the total word count. For example, in a 6000-word paper, aim for the references to take up no more than 1200 words, which would typically amount to about 50 references. Even if you have read a lot of literature, cite only the most essential references.

Structuring a Qualitative Manuscript

Understanding Qualitative Research

In the social sciences, qualitative research is a methodology used to explore underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research examines non-numerical data such as text, images, video, or audio to uncover patterns, insights, and knowledge. Common qualitative research methods include Grounded Theory, Action Research, Phenomenological Research, Ethnography, and Case Studies. Frequently used data collection methods involve interviews, focus groups, observation, and content analysis.

Tips for Structuring a Qualitative Paper

While the basic structure of a qualitative research paper is similar to that of a quantitative one, qualitative papers often offer greater flexibility. The following tips, based on my experience, can serve as useful guidelines for organizing your qualitative research. Additionally, Pratt (2009) offers valuable insights on writing qualitative research papers. Refer to the example by Jung and Hong (2014) for key points, including:

(1) **Introduction**: As seen in the example, the Introduction typically includes sections such as Background, Research Gap, Theoretical Underpinnings, and Research Questions. This structure is quite similar to that of a quantitative research paper, with one key difference: the theoretical/conceptual framework in qualitative research tends to be more flexible and open.

(2) **Methods**: The Methods section, as illustrated in the same example, often includes a more detailed discussion of Data Analysis. Unlike quantitative research, where data analysis is largely statistical, qualitative research involves a degree of researcher subjectivity. By sharing the perspective and methods used in the analysis, the study aims to enhance validity and reliability. Consequently, there is usually less emphasis on detailed explanations of instruments or measures.

(3) **Findings versus Results**: Qualitative research papers often refer to their outcomes as Findings rather than Results, as noted in the example provided.

Results typically refer to the outputs of quantitative research, while Findings encompass a broader range of discoveries from qualitative analysis, including interpretations, patterns, and trends.

(4) **Combining Findings and Discussion Sections**: It is also common to combine the Findings and Discussion sections, as seen in the example by Jung and Hong (2014). This approach avoids repetition and allows for a more seamless explanation of the findings. However, depending on your study's characteristics, you may choose to separate them. For first-time authors, combining these sections can be helpful, allowing you to present the findings and their interpretations in a single, cohesive narrative. If your study involves multiple research questions, you might organize the Findings under corresponding subheadings and discuss them accordingly.

(5) **Word Count Allocation**: When allocating word count, qualitative research papers often end up being slightly longer than their quantitative counterparts. However, it is advisable to begin with a draft of about 6000 words, even if the word limit is 8000, to allow flexibility during revisions. Refer to Table 8.2 for suggested word count allocations.

(6) **Detailing the Findings Section**: Particularly, allocate more words to the Findings section, as it often includes direct examples or quotations from interviews or observation logs, requiring more space to fully report the discoveries. The Discussion section can be relatively shorter. It is advisable to allocate about 40% of your total word count to the combined Findings and Discussion sections, adjusting as needed based on your paper's specifics.

(7) **Highlighting Contribution in the Conclusion Section**: It is highly recommended to begin the Conclusion by highlighting the contributions of your research. This sets a positive and impactful tone, emphasizing the significance of your study's findings within the broader academic context.

(8) **Discussing Limitations Thoughtfully**: After discussing contributions, you can address limitations and suggest future research either in the Conclusion or, as in the example paper by Jung and Hong (2014), at the end of the Discussion section. When presenting limitations, frame them as opportunities for further research to avoid undermining the value of your study. This approach reinforces your credibility, positioning you as a reflective and forward-thinking researcher, while

Table 8.2 Qualitative paper structure and suggested word count for a 6000-word manuscript

Section	Suggested word count (% of Total)
Introduction (including Literature Review)	About 1200 words (20)
Methods	About 900 words (15)
Findings	About 1500 words (25)
Discussion	About 900 words (15)
Conclusion	About 300 words (5)
References	About 1200 words (20)

maintaining the impact of your findings and showcasing your understanding of the complexities in your field.

Remember, "*Well begun is half done!*" Just as a good start sets the stage for success, carefully organizing the structure of your paper is like building a solid foundation—half the work is already accomplished.

I recommend reading references such as Gastel and Day's comprehensive book (2022), which offers valuable guidance on structuring and writing quantitative journal papers, and Belcher's (2019) practical workbook, which provides effective strategies for organizing both the overall paper and individual paragraphs. Additionally, global publishers like Springer, Taylor & Francis, Emerald Publishing, and Elsevier provide guidance on structuring scientific papers.

Checklist: Key Guidelines for Structuring Your Research Paper

- Begin with a clear structure, following journal guidelines and maintaining consistency throughout the paper.
- Allocate word count wisely across sections, ensuring enough space for key sections like the Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion.
- Clearly describe your methods to ensure they are replicable, focusing on design, participants, instruments, and analysis.
- Organize the Results section to address your research questions or hypotheses directly, using subheadings for clarity if needed.
- Provide a meaningful Discussion by interpreting findings, comparing them with previous research, and addressing unexpected results.

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Chapter 9
Week 3: Utilizing ChatGPT and Prompts Strategically and Responsibly

Abstract This chapter, building on Chapter 5, explores how to effectively incorporate ChatGPT into the writing process, with a focus on early career and non-native English researchers. It emphasizes the importance of clear, precise prompts to optimize ChatGPT's utility for enhancing grammar, structure, and expression without altering meaning. Through specific examples of prompts, you will learn how to refine different sections of your manuscript efficiently. Ethical considerations are also addressed, including the need for transparency, proper attribution, and the limitations of AI-generated content. The chapter aims to provide practical strategies for using ChatGPT responsibly while maintaining academic integrity, particularly as you prepare to write your paper.

Keywords Academic integrity · AI writing tools · ChatGPT prompts · Ethical considerations · Prompts

Language and Grammar Checks

In my experience, language and grammar checks are among the most valuable functions of ChatGPT for paper writing. Before using ChatGPT to refine individual sections, I first draft all necessary content in English. Once the content and structure are complete, I focus on enhancing grammar, punctuation, and expression. To avoid unintended changes, I avoid vague prompts like "improve this paragraph" or "enhance the content," as these can lead to overly broad revisions. ChatGPT may sometimes misinterpret or overstate sentences, altering their meaning, so using clear, specific prompts is key to achieving accurate results. If the response is not satisfactory, you can always regenerate it or further refine your prompt for better alignment. Start with your English draft and refine it incrementally by checking grammar, expressions, and logical flow. I find it most effective to submit one section at a time, rather than the entire paper.

Examples of Effective Prompts

Here are some example prompts I frequently use to enhance the expression and grammar of my draft. To ensure that ChatGPT retains the content's details, you can include prompts such as: "Keep all details intact" or "Do not alter the main arguments." This helps preserve your original message while improving language and clarity.

- **To Correct Grammatical and Punctuation Errors**: "Check for grammatical and punctuation errors in this content. Do not make any other changes."
- **To Receive Suggestions Without Changes**: "List suggestions to fix grammatical and punctuation errors without making any changes."
- **To Enhance Sentence or Paragraph Structure**: "Rewrite this content to improve the structure, keeping all key points intact and without altering the content."
- **To Verify the Clarity of a Key Point**: "Check if the first sentence of this paragraph clearly states its key point. If not, suggest improvements."
- **To Convert Passive Voice to Active**: "Rewrite this content to eliminate passive voice where possible."
- **To Improve Readability**: "Improve this content to make it easier to follow without changing the meaning."
- **To Eliminate Redundancy**: "Rewrite this content to remove redundant phrases."
- **To Align with Specific Formatting Guidelines**: "Rewrite this content to follow APA (or MLA) style guidelines."
- **To Format Citations**: "Format citations for this paragraph according to APA (or MLA) style." Always verify the accuracy of the suggested citations against your sources.
- **To Convert American to British English**: "Convert this content from American to British English, including spelling, punctuation, and word choice."
- **To Address Potential Plagiarism**: "Provide suggestions to avoid potential plagiarism concerns."

Note: Along with ChatGPT, tools like Grammarly, Turnitin, and iThenticate are highly recommended to help prevent unintentional plagiarism.

Translation into English

ChatGPT can translate parts or the entirety of a paper from your native language into English. While the translations might be of high quality, they often deviate from the intended meaning and context, so they must be carefully double-checked. You can further refine the translated text by using prompts to ask ChatGPT for specific adjustments. However, if time or language proficiency is an issue, it is crucial to seek help from professional translators or editors. Relying solely on ChatGPT's

translation may not meet the standards required by international journals. Here are a few example prompts that I find effective:

Examples of Effective Prompts

- **To Translate Specific Expressions**: "Provide an English synonym for the word 'XX' (a word in your language), along with its definition."
- **To Translate Sentences or Longer Texts**: "Translate these paragraphs into English for an academic paper intended for publication in an international journal in the field of community psychology. Consider a word limit of 500 words, use formal American English, and apply the following word-translation pairs: (insert your native language words alongside their corresponding English translations as examples).
- **To Request a Line-by-Line Direct Translation**: "Provide a direct, line-by-line translation of the following paragraph. Ensure that each line of the translation mirrors the original text exactly, maintaining the same structure without adding or altering any details."
- **To Check and Review ChatGPT's Own Translations**: "Review the translation you provided for accuracy (or consistency, clarity, formality, etc.). Ensure that the meaning and nuances of the original text are preserved without any major alterations." "Review the translation to ensure precision. Verify that no important details or subtle meanings from the original text have been lost or misinterpreted."

Note: Remember, while tools like ChatGPT or Google Translate are quick and convenient, they may not fully grasp the nuances of your research context or capture the entire content accurately. To ensure quality and precision, it is advisable to use multiple translation tools and, if possible, consult professional translators.

Generating and Revising Titles, Abstracts, and More

When you need ideas during paper writing, ChatGPT can be a helpful tool. ChatGPT can refine your existing abstract, summary, or title, or even suggest new ones based on your paper's content. Always review the suggestions and make adjustments to ensure they fit your paper perfectly. With proper prompts and follow-up questions, you can get effective results. Here are some example prompts I find effective:

Examples of Effective Prompts

- **To Revise an Existing Abstract or Summary**: "Rewrite this abstract/summary to improve clarity and conciseness." You can add more specific instructions, such as, "Ensure it includes the research purpose, methods, findings, and implications."
- **To Draft an Abstract or Summary from Provided Content**: "Suggest a 150-word abstract or summary for this content." If necessary, specify, "Include key points of the study, methods, findings, and implications in a concise and impactful manner."
- **To Improve Headings and Subheadings**: "Improve this content by creating more appropriate and compelling headings and subheadings." If you prefer shorter titles, specify, "Propose a couple of concise headings rather than lengthy ones."
- **To Generate Title Ideas**: "List 10 suggestions to make this title more attractive to readers. The title is for an academic journal article." If the suggestions do not meet your expectations, request more by adding, "Give me 10 additional titles, including 'higher education,' 'inquiry,' and 'case study' within a 20-word limit."
- **To Suggest Keyword Ideas**: "Please suggest 10 relevant keywords for this content and present them in alphabetical order." After confirming the journal's keyword requirements, you can select from the suggested options or ask ChatGPT to generate more.
- **To Expand Ideas**: If you have some bullet points or an outline of sections of your paper, you can ask ChatGPT to expand them into fuller paragraphs with relevant examples or data. For instance, you might say, "Here are some bullet points on the effects of social media on happiness. Please expand them into a few cohesive paragraphs, incorporating the given example and providing additional relevant data and explanations."

Remember, it is essential to review and verify these suggestions to ensure their accuracy and relevance before using them in your paper.

Generating Visual Ideas

ChatGPT (in the paid version) can help you organize data into tables, graphs, or charts based on the results of your study and can even create these visuals directly for you. Additionally, it can assist in drafting clear and informative captions for your visual data representations. Here are some example prompts that I find effective:

Examples of Effective Prompts

- **For Ideas about Figures**: "Here is data on the average social media usage among different age groups and its correlation with reported happiness levels. Can you

suggest how to organize this information into a graph, including the best type of graph and key variables to highlight?"

- **For Ideas about Tables**: "I have gathered data on the GDP growth rates of several countries over the last five years. Here they are. Can you suggest how to best organize this into a table, including what columns and details would make the data clear and insightful?"
- **For Ideas about Captions**: "I have created a bar chart showing the percentage of students preferring online versus classroom learning from 2020 to 2024. Can you suggest a couple of captions that explain the purpose of the graph and summarize the key trends?" "Look at the file attached with a table comparing energy consumption from various renewable sources over the past five years. Can you suggest a couple of captions that explain the data, focusing on trends and significant changes?"
- **For Generating Tables and Figures**: "Here is the text explanation of the data collected. Could you create a table along with the figure?" You can continue requesting simpler or more comprehensive versions of the table or figure until you are satisfied with the results. For tables, you can download them in an Excel file if needed.

When given the following prompt, the result was generated: "Could you create a simple table and figure for this content? –*The sample comprised 61.5% (n = 410) women, 37.5% (n =250) men, and 1% (n=7) who preferred not to state their gender. In terms of age, 26.5% (n=177) of the participants were in their teens, 49.9% (n=333) were in their twenties, 19.6% (n=131) were in their thirties to forties, and 3.9% (n=26) were in their fifties to sixties.*" I was quite impressed with the table and figure created by ChatGPT (currently in the paid version) when I used it for the first time! (See Fig. 9)

Fig. 9: Table and Figure created by ChatGPT

Category	Sub-category	Percentage (%)	n (Sample Size)
Gender	Women	61.5	410
	Men	37.5	250
	Prefer not to stat	1	7
Age	Teens	26.5	177
	Twenties	49.9	333
	Thirties to Forties	19.6	131
	Fifties to Sixties	3.9	26

Gender Distribution

Age Distribution
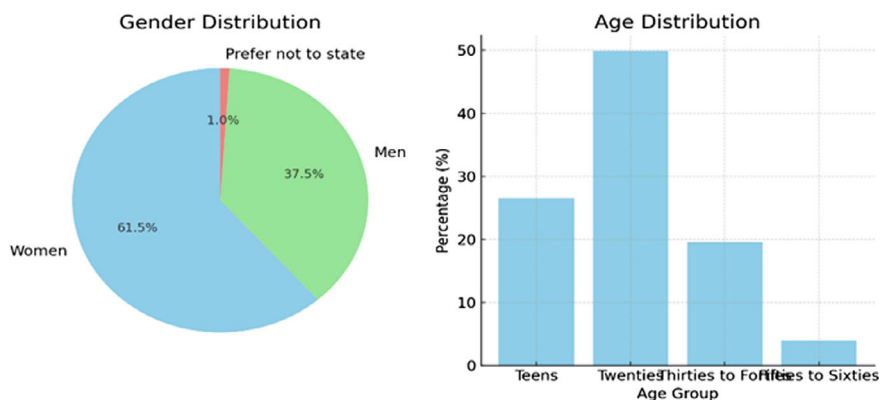
Enhancing Quality, Clarity, and Consistency

ChatGPT can be a helpful tool for simplifying complex concepts and making them more accessible. Breaking down complicated ideas into simpler terms helps ensure key points are communicated clearly. Additionally, ChatGPT can assist in shortening lengthy sentences by rephrasing them for better readability. It can also support the overall flow and consistency of your paper by reviewing the logical progression of arguments and identifying potential inconsistencies in data, reasoning, or references. However, it is important to review and refine these suggestions to ensure they align with your original intent. Here are some effective prompts I use:

Examples of Effective Prompts

- **To Simplify Complex Concepts**: Use prompts like, "Rewrite this content to simplify the key concept for better understanding," "Break down this idea into simpler terms," or "Explain this content in a more straightforward manner."
- **To Shorten Long Sentences**: Ask, "This sentence is quite lengthy. Can you break it down into shorter, clearer sentences?" or "Simplify this paragraph for better readability," or "Rephrase this sentence to make it more concise and easier to understand." Always double-check that ChatGPT's revisions maintain your original meaning, as misunderstandings can result in incorrect changes.
- **To Verify the Logical Flow and Consistency of the Paper**: Use prompts like, "Review the paper to ensure the logic of my arguments flows smoothly," or "Check if the overall structure maintains logical coherence," or "Ensure the paper's organization supports a logical progression of ideas." In my experience, feedback in this area is often overly positive, so using more specific prompts is recommended to obtain valuable assistance.

- **To Check for Consistency in Data, Arguments, or References**: Ask, "Verify if each argument aligns logically with the main thesis," or "Check for any gaps or inconsistencies in my reasoning," or "Ensure consistency in data, examples, and references throughout the paper." In my experience, you can expect valuable suggestions that help improve the overall coherence of your paper.
- **To Review the Paper**: Ask, "Please read the introduction and literature review of my paper. Can you act as a peer reviewer and provide feedback, including critical questions, redundant parts, suggestions for improvement, and any gaps or missing elements you notice?" "Can you review the methods section of my paper (attached) as if you were a peer reviewer? Please point out any potential weaknesses, missing details, or areas that might need clarification or improvement." I usually get valuable results from this request. By following ChatGPT's directions, you can effectively improve your paper.

Ethical Use of ChatGPT and Prompts

A prompt is a query provided to ChatGPT to generate a response. When crafting prompts, it is important to keep in mind the ethical considerations of using ChatGPT.

Understand ChatGPT's Limitations

ChatGPT is a powerful tool, but it has significant limitations, especially in its current version. It does not have true knowledge or deep understanding of the material it generates; instead, it predicts text based on patterns in the data it has been trained on. As a result, ChatGPT can produce plausible-sounding but factually incorrect or misleading information. Therefore, do not rely on it to critically assess your ideas or conduct an integrated literature review for you. It may also provide fabricated citations or misrepresent existing ones, as I have observed frequently. Always use ChatGPT as a supplement, not a substitute, for your own research and judgment. However, as ChatGPT continues to advance, its capabilities and role may expand.

Take Responsibility for Your Work

Any mistakes generated by ChatGPT ultimately fall on you. You must carefully review and verify all suggestions before incorporating them into your paper. While ChatGPT can assist with language, structure, and brainstorming, the final decisions must be yours, and you need to ensure accuracy and reliability in the translation and content. Accept accountability for any errors, and if misinformation occurs, be prepared to correct it, including retracting papers if necessary. Do you recall the

emphasis on reading and comprehension of English papers in Chap. 1? To fully take responsibility for work assisted by ChatGPT, you must thoroughly understand the revisions made to your writing.

Ethical Transparency and Disclosure

Transparency is essential when using AI tools like ChatGPT. If a journal, co-author, or institution requires disclosure of AI assistance, make sure to provide it. As introduced in Chap. 5, some journals require authors to disclose the prompts used during the writing process. While the use of tools like spellcheck or grammar software may not need to be reported, AI-generated content is held to a different ethical standard. Be transparent about your use of ChatGPT, as this helps maintain trust and credibility in the academic community.

For further insights on the ethical use of ChatGPT, refer to Bozkurt (2024), Guleria et al. (2023), Jarrah et al. (2023), and Stepanechko and Kozub (2023).

Checklist: Guidelines for Integrating ChatGPT into Your Writing Process

- Draft your content first to ensure the foundation is your own work before refining it with ChatGPT.
- Use clear, specific prompts instead of vague instructions to get precise results.
- Carefully review ChatGPT's suggestions for accuracy and alignment with your intended meaning.
- Use ChatGPT as a supplementary tool, not a replacement for critical thinking.
- Check for consistency in arguments, data, and references, but always verify results yourself.
- Be cautious of fabricated or incorrect citations, and verify them for accuracy.
- Disclose the use of ChatGPT, including specific prompts, if required by journals or co-authors.
- Tailor ChatGPT's suggestions to match your style and voice, and meet institutional standards.
- Take full responsibility for the content, ensuring any errors introduced by ChatGPT are corrected.
- Stay updated on the evolving features of AI tools like ChatGPT as they rapidly advance.

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Chapter 10
Week 4: Crafting a Compelling Title and Abstract

Abstract This chapter focuses on crafting two essential components of your manuscript: the title and abstract. While you might think these can be created after completing your writing, I believe that developing them at the beginning gives you a clearer sense of direction. In my view, they serve as a kind of "destination," helping you stay focused throughout the process. Of course, both title and abstract will evolve and be refined as you write. Ultimately, these elements serve as the first point of contact for journal editors and reviewers, shaping their initial impressions. A well-crafted title and abstract not only grab attention but also emphasize the significance and impact of your research. Through various examples, this chapter offers practical tips and highlights key strategies for creating an engaging and informative title and abstract that capture the essence of your work. By refining the title and abstract, you can maximize the visibility and discoverability of your paper, ensuring it reaches the right audience.

Three Major Roles of a Paper Title

When searching for academic papers, the title is the first element encountered, and it plays a critical role in shaping the decision to read further. If the title is vague or overly generic, even groundbreaking research can be easily overlooked. A well-crafted title, however, serves three essential functions.

Communicating the Research Topic

A clearly articulated title conveys the subject and focus of your research, offering a concise yet comprehensive overview of your study's scope. It serves as the first filter

for readers, helping them quickly assess whether the paper aligns with their interests. When specific and descriptive, yet concise, the title allows readers to immediately grasp the core topic of the study, avoiding any ambiguity that could deter potential readers or reviewers.

Conveying the Research's Contribution

Beyond merely indicating the topic, a strong title can emphasize the study's unique findings, innovative methodologies, or its significant contributions to the field. This element of the title not only differentiates the paper from others in the same field but also captures the reader's interest by highlighting the novelty or relevance of the work. A title that reflects the contribution of your research can inspire curiosity and further engagement from the reader.

Enhancing Discoverability

A title that effectively communicates the research's topic and contribution also enhances the paper's visibility in academic databases and search engines. By incorporating relevant keywords, a well-structured title improves the discoverability of the research. This increases the likelihood that it will reach the right audience—whether that be other researchers, policymakers, or practitioners looking for work in the specific field or methodology covered. Enhancing accessibility through strategic keyword inclusion may also benefit citation potential, as more readers can easily find and cite the work in their own studies.

By focusing on these three aspects—clarity of topic, indication of contribution, and accessibility through keywords—you can craft a title that not only captures attention but also maximizes the impact and reach of your research. Now, let's look at some examples.

Examples of Titles

To further illustrate the importance of a well-crafted title, let's analyze a few examples:

Example 1: Education Expansion in Vietnam

Imagine you are interested in the topic of education expansion and are searching for related research. Consider the following titles and see which one captures your attention most:

A. Education Expansion and Its Returns to Education in Vietnam: A Two-Step Heckman Model Analysis
B. Deciphering the Complex Educational Terrain: An In-Depth Exploration of Education Expansion and Returns in Vietnam Utilizing a Two-Step Heckman Model for Rigorous Analysis
C. Vietnam's Education Expansion: A Heckman Model Study.

Title A is likely the most appealing. It effectively communicates the specific research focus—education expansion in Vietnam—while also indicating the methodology (the two-step Heckman model), making it both informative and engaging. This title, taken from a paper published in the *Asia Pacific Education Review* (Sanfo et al. 2024), strikes a balance between clarity and detail.

In contrast, Title B is overly wordy, weakening its impact with unnecessary complexity. The phrase "Deciphering the Complex Educational Terrain" adds little value and can confuse readers.

Title C, while concise, lacks enough detail to engage potential readers, making it too broad and generic.

Example 2: Social Media and Happiness

Now, suppose you are looking for research on how social media impacts individual happiness. Consider these titles:

D. Do Social Network Sites Enhance or Undermine Subjective Well-Being? A Critical Review
E. Social Media and Your Happiness: A Review
F. Disentangling the Complex Interplay Between Social Network Sites and Subjective Well-Being: An In-Depth Critical Appraisal Examining Enhancement and Undermining Factors.

Title D is the most effective. It directly addresses the research question and communicates the focus on social media's impact on subjective well-being, while also signaling that it is a critical review. The question format engages the reader, inviting them to explore the findings. This title is from a paper published in *Social Issues and Policy Review* (Verduyn et al. 2017).

Title E is too vague, offering no clear insight into the specific aspects of social media and happiness that the paper will address.

Title F, though informative, is overly complex and convoluted, making it hard to immediately grasp the main focus of the research.

Example 3: Blended Learning Effectiveness

Lastly, consider the case of researching blended learning effectiveness. Which title would catch your attention?

G. Blended Learning Effectiveness: The Relationship between Student Characteristics, Design Features, and Outcomes
H. Exploring the Intricate Dynamics: Investigating the Correlations among Diverse Student Traits, Varied Design Components, and Multifaceted Educational Outcomes within the Complex Realm of Blended Learning Effectiveness
 I. Blended Learning: Student Traits, Design, Outcomes.

Title G is the most effective. It clearly outlines the research focus—blended learning effectiveness—and identifies key variables such as student characteristics, design features, and outcomes. This title, from a paper published in the *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* (Kintu et al. 2017), is specific and informative, though it could be refined by adding its methodology, for instance, *A Survey on Blended Learning Effectiveness: The Interplay between Student Characteristics, Design Features, and Outcomes.*

Title H is overly complicated, making it difficult to quickly understand the research's focus.

Title I, while concise, is too general and lacks the specificity necessary to capture a reader's interest.

Strategies for Crafting a Clear and Compelling Paper Title

Now, are you ready to craft a title that clearly reflects the essence of your research, captures the reader's attention, and enhances its academic impact? Remember, your title does not need to be finalized at this stage. As you progress through the stages of writing, you can gradually refine your title until the final version is completed by applying the following strategies.

Step 1: Brainstorm Potential Titles with Keywords

Start by listing several potential titles that are clear, concise, and accurately reflect the content of your research, incorporating your key terms. Try to avoid vague or overly broad titles, and remember that using keywords in the title can make your paper more discoverable. ChatGPT can assist with generating ideas.

> **Example**: In one of my studies, I developed an online education model. The theoretical framework emphasized expanded teaching and learning spaces in online education compared to face-to-face settings, particularly at the university level. Since this was a conceptual paper

rather than experimental or survey-based, I needed a title that would capture the attention of the editorial team and reviewers, ensuring they would not discard my paper as irrelevant. I started by listing several keywords: online education, e-education, theoretical framework, model development, extended teaching spaces, expanded learning spaces, higher education, etc. I then created the following potential titles:

- Developing a Theoretical Framework for E-Education: Extending Teaching and Learning Spaces in Higher Education
- Exploring Theoretical Foundations in Online Education Focusing on Extended Teaching and Learning Spaces
- Expanded Teaching & Learning Spaces and Model Development in E-Education: A Theoretical Analysis for Higher Education Contexts.

Step 2: Refine Your Title for Clarity and Specificity

As you continue writing, refine your title to reflect a clearer and more specific focus. While it is important to use technical terms, avoid overly specialized jargon that might be difficult for readers outside your field to understand.

Example: While the potential titles listed above initially helped guide my writing, as I progressed, I realized that the framework was more aligned with a model emphasizing extended spaces for teaching and learning. The term "theory" seemed less appropriate, so I opted for "model" instead. Although "online education" is a well-known term, I chose "e-education," which, while slightly less familiar, still conveyed a similar meaning. I also removed "higher education" from the title since the model could be applied not only to university education but also to primary, secondary, and adult education. The revised titles were:

- Toward a Comprehensive Model for E-Education: Integrating Extended Teaching and Learning Spaces
- Exploring a Model for E-Education: Extended Teaching and Learning Spaces.

Step 3: Add an Element of Intrigue to Attract Readers

To make your title more compelling, consider adding an element of intrigue or appeal. This might involve emphasizing the novelty, significance, or innovative aspects of your research. For example, "A critical review" is more compelling than "A review," and if the study involves comparative research, consider including "From a comparative cultural perspective." If a new analytical method was used, mention it in the title.

Example: Reviewing the two revised titles from the editor's perspective, I identified a key point of interest. Since our model presented extended teaching spaces and extended learning spaces as separate entities, I decided to explicitly mention both in the title, even though

it made the title slightly longer. This way, editors and reviewers would notice this unique aspect of the study and be intrigued. The final title was:

- Exploring a Model for E-Education: Extended Teaching Spaces and Extended Learning Spaces.

Step 4: Align the Title with the Target Journal

After completing the paper, adjust the title to ensure it aligns with the target audience and the objectives or guidelines of the journal to which you are submitting. Consider if any parts of the title could be streamlined or reworded for greater clarity or impact.

> **Example**: The title mentioned above was deemed easily understandable by the target audience (primarily editors and reviewers) and aligned with the journal's objectives. However, "Exploring" was deemed unnecessary, so the final title was refined as follows. This final title was accepted for publication in the *British Journal of Educational Technology*:

- A Model for E-Education: Extended Teaching Spaces and Extended Learning Spaces.

To emphasize, crafting an effective academic title is an iterative process that evolves with the development of your paper. A clear, concise, and compelling title not only encapsulates the essence of your research but also boosts its accessibility and impact within the academic community. Now, let's shift our attention to the abstract.

Three Major Roles of an Abstract

Once readers are drawn in by a paper's title, the abstract becomes the next crucial component they encounter. Even if the full paper is behind a paywall or restricted access, the abstract is typically available to the public, making it an essential gateway to your research. As Belcher (2019) notes, the abstract serves multiple functions, but here I would like to highlight three critical roles:

Acting as a Summary and Communication Tool

The abstract plays a dual role in both summarizing the research and acting as an effective communication tool. It provides a concise yet comprehensive overview of the study's purpose, methodology, and key findings, allowing readers to quickly grasp the research question, approach, and major outcomes. This high-level summary serves

as a roadmap, guiding potential readers through the structure of the paper and helping them assess its relevance. At the same time, the abstract must communicate complex ideas in clear, accessible language, ensuring that readers from various disciplines can understand the research's significance. By highlighting the study's importance, innovative aspects, and unique contributions, your abstract can capture interest and encourage further exploration. It not only informs but also engages, inviting readers to explore the full paper.

Enhancing Discoverability and Impact

Incorporating relevant keywords into the abstract plays a vital role in enhancing the paper's discoverability through academic databases, search engines, and citation tools. This strategic use of keywords ensures that your research is easily found by other scholars who are searching for work related to your topic. A well-developed abstract not only improves visibility but also facilitates scholarly communication by allowing others to quickly understand the significance of your work. This increased discoverability is crucial for amplifying the impact of your research, as it makes your paper more likely to be cited and referenced by others in the field. In turn, a highly visible and frequently cited paper contributes to the ongoing dialogue within your academic community and can influence future research directions.

Working as an Anchor for Writing and Structure

From my experience as an author, I believe the most important role of the abstract is to act as a reference point that keeps your writing on track and aligned with your research objectives. By outlining the key elements of your study early on, the abstract helps ensure that your work stays focused, avoiding unnecessary digressions that can detract from the central argument or findings. It serves as a roadmap, reminding you of the core purpose and direction of your paper as you develop the full content. This approach has been invaluable in maintaining both the structure and relevance of my writing. As you develop the full paper, the abstract continues to guide you, ensuring clarity, coherence, and consistency from start to finish.

Examples of Abstracts

Let's review the following examples to identify effective strategies that could be applied to your own abstract.

Example 1: Abstract of a Qualitative Research Paper

- This example is taken from the paper by Lee and Jung (2021) and is 160 words long, using British English.

"This study examines university faculty members' successful behaviours and the factors influencing these behaviours, when dealing with the issues posed by emergency remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic." **(This sentence clearly states the purpose of the research. The need or importance of the research is not separately mentioned, likely because it was conducted early in the COVID era when readers were already highly interested in the topic.)**

"Data was gathered through interviews with 12 carefully chosen instructors who competently prepared and implemented their first online classes despite various challenges encountered during the crisis." **(This describes the methodology, including participant details and data collection methods.)**

"Interview transcripts were analysed by applying the theoretical concepts of the positive deviance approach to identify exemplary behaviours in the face of crisis." **(The data analysis method is emphasized, specifically the use of the positive deviance approach.)**

"The results revealed that the participants performed three unique but effective behaviours, called 'positive deviance behaviours', in their online teaching: philosophy-driven decision making informed planning and ongoing performance monitoring. These behaviours were affected by individual factors (e.g., community engagement and emotion management during different phases of emergency remote teaching) and organisational factors (e.g., networks/ hardware and training/support)." **(The abstract effectively presents key findings and the novel behaviours identified.)**

"By examining the positive deviance behaviours of instructors who delivered effective classes, this study offers online teaching and faculty development strategies in both crisis and non-crisis situations." **(The conclusion emphasizes the practical contributions of the research, showing its relevance beyond the pandemic.)**

Example 2: Abstract of a Quantitative Research Paper in Open Education

This example is from Jung and Lee (2022), and it is 147 words long.

"The aim of this study was to develop and validate a multidimensional open thinking scale (OTS) in order to measure adult learners' open thinking as a key learning outcome of open educational practices (OEP) through a three-phase process of item generation, theoretical analysis, and psychometric analysis." **(This sentence integrates the research purpose, conceptual framework, and methodology into a single, concise sentence.)**

"Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses of data from 610 students in 24 countries revealed a clear structure consisting of six constructs of open thinking: openness to multiple perspectives, openness to new learning, openness to collaboration, openness to sharing, openness to change, and openness to diversity and inclusion." **(This section succinctly presents the data analysis and key results.)**

"Known-groups validity tests showed that the more frequently a learner is exposed to OEP, the higher the OTS scores obtained." **(This highlights the new findings of the study.)**

"Results suggest that OTS could contribute to OEP and research by defining and elaborating on the concept of open thinking, exploring its relationship to learners' OEP experiences, and measuring and developing students' open thinking." **(The abstract concludes with the implications and significance of the research, highlighting its potential contribution to the field).**

Strategies for Writing an Effective Abstract

Building on the analysis of the two abstract examples above, I will now present a few effective strategies for writing an abstract that has worked well for me. As you gain more experience with international publishing, you will likely discover additional strategies that work best for you.

Step 1: Review Abstracts from Published Papers

Before drafting your abstract, it is helpful to review examples of abstracts from papers published in relevant journals. This practice exposes you to various writing styles, structures, and approaches, offering inspiration for your own work. Key strategies include:

- Identify effective elements: Pay attention to what makes these abstracts engaging and concise. Look for clarity in how they introduce the research problem, summarize methods and findings, and offer conclusions.
- Analyze structure: Observe how published abstracts are structured in your field, focusing on how they transition from one part to another smoothly. Find a couple of abstracts that you can use as a guide to format your own abstract.

Step 2: Familiarize Yourself with Journal Guidelines

Before you start abstract writing, familiarize yourself with the abstract guidelines of the journal you are submitting to. Journals typically provide word limits (usually between 150 and 250 words) and advise against using citations, abbreviations, or excessive jargon. Adhering to these guidelines ensures that your abstract meets the journal's standards. Key strategies include:

- Read the author guidelines: Carefully review the journal's abstract submission criteria for length, format, and specific requirements.
- Tailor your abstract: Ensure your abstract follows these guidelines, covering all essential elements while avoiding unnecessary details that might exceed the word count.

Step 3: Draft Your Abstract with a Clear Structure

When drafting your abstract, use a general structure that includes: (1) research background, (2) research objectives or problems, (3) methodology, (4) key findings, and (5) conclusions or implications. Depending on the nature of your research, some elements may need more attention, while others might be condensed. Key strategies include:

- Write the abstract clearly and concisely, using straightforward language while avoiding unnecessary complexity, but include essential technical terms.
- Start with the research purpose, clearly stating the problem your research addresses and its significance, while omitting unnecessary background details.
- Provide a brief overview of the methodology, emphasizing thorough data collection and rigorous analysis.
- Highlight the most significant and novel findings, offering specific data when possible, and minimize the discussion of well-known findings.
- Discuss the implications of your findings, focusing on their contributions to the field, whether practical or theoretical.
- Include relevant keywords to improve searchability and indexing in academic databases.

Step 4: Revisit the Abstract After Writing the Main Body

Once you have completed the main body of your paper, revisit your abstract to refine and polish it. Ensure it accurately reflects the content and key findings of the final paper. You may also consider using AI writing tools, like ChatGPT, to enhance clarity, tone, and overall impact. Key strategies include:

- Ensure consistency: Review the abstract to confirm that all the elements are aligned with the detailed content of your paper.
- Polish for clarity and impact: Use AI tools to suggest improvements based on your full text, helping to refine phrasing and improve the overall effectiveness of the abstract.

Are you ready to draft your paper's title and abstract? I hope the strategies above will help you create a title and abstract that are clear, engaging, and impactful, laying the groundwork for a successful paper. For more detailed guidance on writing the title and abstract, refer to Belcher (2019) and Tullu (2019).

Checklist: Tips to Crafting an Effective Title and Abstract

- Ensure your title is clear, specific, and accurately reflects the core focus of your research, highlighting any novel or innovative aspects to make it more compelling.
- Incorporate relevant keywords in your title to improve discoverability in academic databases.
- Tailor your title to align with the journal's audience and submission guidelines.
- Review and analyze abstracts from published papers to identify effective ways to present research problems, methods, and findings, using their structure as a guide for your own.
- Follow the journal's word limit guidelines, avoid jargon and unnecessary details, and structure your abstract logically.
- Revisit and refine your abstract after completing the paper, using AI tools to enhance clarity and consistency.

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Chapter 11
Week 5: Creating a Strong and Captivating Introduction

Abstract Crafting a compelling introduction is critical for framing your research and engaging your readers. This chapter builds on earlier discussions of structuring research papers, offering a clear, systematic approach to developing an introduction using subheadings like Background, Research Gap, Theoretical Framework, and Research Questions. While these exact subheadings are not mandatory, adhering to this structure will guide you in crafting a more logical and persuasive Introduction. I believe that by following this structured method, first-time authors can systematically organize their ideas, ensuring that all critical elements of their research are addressed in a cohesive and logical manner. Additionally, this approach minimizes the risk of omissions and helps authors craft a well-rounded, compelling introduction that captures the reader's attention from the outset.

Background

The Introduction typically begins with a Background section, where you review previous research related to your topic and discuss what has been discovered so far. The primary goal here is to establish the context for your research within the existing body of knowledge. However, merely listing prior studies will not effectively convey where your research fits or why it is important. Before moving on, I strongly recommend reading Boote and Beile (2005) and Ridley (2012). These references provide a critical perspective on how literature reviews should be written and used in academic research, offering valuable insights on what to include and how to structure the entire Introduction. Now, let's consider the following strategies for crafting a strong Background section.

What to Include

(1) **Comprehensive Review**: Start by thoroughly reviewing relevant academic papers, books, and other credible sources to explain the key findings, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks from previous research related to your topic. Rather than introducing each study individually, aim to provide an overarching view of the major research that has been conducted in your area.

(2) **Inclusion of Key Works**: When discussing prior research, ensure you include well-known studies, foundational historical literature, and more recent publications. Do not just focus on recent materials. It is particularly useful to review articles published in the journal to which you plan to submit your paper, focusing on those relevant to your topic.

(3) **Explanation of Theories and Concepts**: Beyond simply providing definitions, clarify how key theories or concepts have been applied or tested in previous research and explain how they relate to your research questions or hypotheses.

How to Write

(1) **Logical Structure**: Organize your paragraphs logically, moving from broad concepts to specific details related to your research. The first paragraph should generally introduce the research topic from a broad perspective, while subsequent paragraphs should progressively narrow the scope to focus more specifically on your study.

(2) **Subheadings and Word Allocation**: I find it extremely helpful to structure the Background section into 3–4 subheadings, with a carefully allocated word count to each, ensuring balanced coverage of key topics. For example, in a 1200-word Introduction, you might allocate around 800 words to the Background, dividing it evenly across subheadings. Based on personal experience, this word allocation method proves especially effective for logically structuring the content of a paper.

(3) **Topic Sentence-First Style**: Each paragraph should begin with its main idea, followed by sentences that support or elaborate on that idea. In some languages, such as Korean and Japanese, the main idea is often placed at the end of the paragraph. However, in international research papers, the topic sentence typically appears at the beginning, followed by supporting sentences. This topic-sentence-first structure should be applied not just in the Introduction but throughout the entire paper.

Example of the Background Section

Let's consider an example. The Introduction in Lee and Jung's (2021) paper begins with the Background, though it does so without explicit subheadings. However, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that the first four paragraphs effectively function as the Background by discussing prior research. Since the paper does not have a distinct Literature Review section, the Background section integrates the review of previous studies, moving from general discussions to more specific ones, providing a cohesive overview of the relevant literature. Now, open the paper by Lee and Jung (2021) and refer to the brief analysis of its Background section provided below.

(1) **First Paragraph (A General Overview of Broadly Related Topics)**: The opening paragraph provides a general overview of faculty experiences with online education during crises. It discusses a broad range of topics, findings, and methodologies from previous studies, giving readers a foundational understanding of the research landscape related to online education in emergency contexts.

(2) **Second Paragraph (Focused Discussions on More Closely Related Studies)**: The second paragraph narrows the focus, zooming in on faculty experiences with online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. It discusses studies directly related to the pandemic, while the final two sentences summarize the key findings and limitations of prior research, thereby highlighting the gaps that the present study aims to address.

(3) **Third Paragraph (Discussion on Theories Used in Previous Studies)**: This paragraph shifts to an analysis of the theoretical frameworks employed in the related literature. It explores various theories used in prior research to explain factors influencing the adoption of online education, and this discussion serves as a transition into the presentation of the theoretical framework that will guide the current study.

(4) **Fourth Paragraph (Detailing Specific Factors of Those Theories Discussed Above)**: Finally, the discussion becomes more focused, concentrating on specific factors from the theories mentioned earlier. In particular, it addresses the factors influencing faculty adoption of online education during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, linking them directly to the study's central research questions and setting the stage for a deeper exploration of these factors in the paper.

In this example, each paragraph begins with a clear topic sentence that encapsulates its main idea and leads the reader through a logically structured background. This structured approach ensures that the Introduction effectively establishes a strong foundation for the research, guiding the reader through the literature in a coherent and purposeful manner. As emphasized in earlier foundational chapters, closely reading and analyzing related papers published in reputable journals—especially their Introduction sections—will significantly enhance your ability to write a strong Background section with greater confidence and clarity.

Research Gap (or Research Problem)

After establishing the background and context in the first part of the Introduction, the next critical step is to address the gaps or limitations in existing research through the Research Gap (or Research Problem) section. The goal here is not simply to list the shortcomings of previous studies in an effort to showcase your analytical skills but rather to highlight the necessity and significance of your research within the broader academic context. By effectively identifying and addressing these gaps, you not only justify the relevance of your study but also set the stage for its contribution to the field.

What to Include

(1) **Analyze Prior Research**: Start by thoroughly examining the methodologies, assumptions, and interpretations of previous studies to identify any inconsistencies, limitations, or areas where findings may be contradictory. After reviewing the literature, discuss any limitations or gaps in previous research. Alternatively, as shown in the earlier example, you can subtly highlight these shortcomings while reviewing prior studies in the Background section. In some cases, this approach can help maintain a logical flow while allowing you to critique existing research effectively.

(2) **Identify Gaps or Problems**: Focus on what is lacking in the current understanding of the topic or the prevailing research methodologies, and articulate why addressing these gaps is essential. Rather than pointing out irrelevant limitations, concentrate on issues that are directly tied to your research question, thereby reinforcing the importance of your study.

   For example, if the studies reviewed in the Background predominantly relied on short-term quantitative research on college students, but your study employs long-term qualitative methods with the same demographic, the Research Gap should emphasize the limitations of the previous short-term, quantitative approaches. This contrast highlights the value and originality of your methodological choice.

   Another example could involve research that has heavily focused on individual psychological theories while neglecting social influences. In this case, you would emphasize this as a significant limitation and advocate for the integration of sociological perspectives alongside psychological theories. This approach not only identifies a critical gap but also reinforces the relevance and significance of your study by proposing a more comprehensive framework to address the issue.

How to Write

(1) **Keep the Paragraph Concise**: The Research Gap section is typically written as a couple of paragraphs, usually between 150 and 250 words. This concise format allows you to clearly articulate the specific limitations of previous research and introduce the critical need for your study. Although this section is brief, it must be comprehensive enough to cover the gaps in the current literature. Depending on the complexity of your research and the field of study, the length can vary slightly, but the key is to remain focused. Overly detailed critiques may overwhelm the reader, so prioritize the most significant gaps that your research directly addresses.

(2) **Provide an Objective Analysis**: When analyzing the limitations of prior studies, it is crucial to maintain an objective and scholarly tone. The goal is to identify areas that remain unexplored or inadequately addressed. Avoid overly negative language or biased critiques that may come off as dismissive. Instead, focus on pointing out methodological limitations, untested assumptions, or gaps in the data, and discuss how these gaps create opportunities for further research—specifically your own. This balanced approach ensures that your critique is constructive and professional.

(3) **Maintain a Balanced Perspective**: While identifying gaps or limitations in previous research is important, it is equally critical to acknowledge the strengths of the existing studies. This balanced perspective demonstrates that your research builds upon a solid foundation of knowledge, rather than attempting to discredit prior work. By recognizing the contributions of earlier studies, you position your research as a valuable extension that complements and advances the field. Highlighting how your work adds value to the existing body of knowledge fosters credibility and shows that your study is not only necessary but also capable of pushing boundaries further.

(4) **Ensure Specificity and Persuasiveness**: When explaining how your research addresses the identified gaps, it is essential to be both specific and persuasive. General or vague statements about filling a gap may weaken the impact of your argument. Instead, clearly define the unique contributions of your study and the specific ways it addresses the shortcomings of prior research. If your methodology or approach is particularly innovative—whether through the use of new technologies, interdisciplinary perspectives, or novel frameworks—emphasize these aspects. Being precise and convincing in this section helps establish the significance of your study and its potential impact.

Examples of the Research Gap Section

Example 1 is taken from Lee and Jung (2021). In the fifth paragraph of the Introduction section, the authors present the Research Gap, discussing the limitations of

previous studies and transitioning effectively into the theoretical framework for their current study. Let's break down this part:

> "*While the technology and innovation adoption theories and relevant empirical studies may help researchers better understand factors influencing adoption behaviors across diverse contexts, their focus is mainly on individuals' voluntary use of a technology or their acceptance of an innovation including online teaching, when such opportunities exist (Dillon, 2001; Gunasinghe et al., 2019b; Taherdoost, 2018).*" **(This opening sentence highlights the limitation of previous studies, specifically that the theoretical frameworks predominantly focused on situations where individuals had the freedom to choose whether to adopt a technology.)**

> "*These theories are therefore only able to offer limited predictive capabilities for those situations in which individuals have no choice other than to pursue the same end within more or less the same time and resource framework. Such is the case in emergency online teaching situations, where individual faculty members are obliged to develop and implement emergency online courses, using certain available technologies and in accordance with certain requirements specified by their university. Even when all faculty members are mandated to adopt online teaching, they of course make technological and pedagogical choices concerning what media or technology they will use and what instructional practices they will implement. To examine the factors affecting such instructional changes during emergency online teaching, one must consider the social processes that take place between the individual and the surrounding contexts as well as other individual and organizational factors.*" **(This part argues convincingly that in situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where instructors have limited control over the broad approach to online teaching but retain some autonomy in their specific choices, the existing theoretical frameworks fall short. The authors suggest that a different theoretical approach is needed to account for the complex interplay of individual and contextual factors.)**

> "*In this regard, the present study applies, as an umbrella framework, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, with its focus on the relationship between individual experience and interactions with surrounding contexts, and further, draws on the Technology Acceptance Model to identify factors affecting instructional changes made by university faculty members providing emergency online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.*" **(This final sentence introduces the theoretical framework that the authors employ in their study, providing a clear link between the identified gap and the framework they propose to address it.)**

Example 2 is taken from Jung and Hong (2014) and focuses on improving student support models at distance education universities in Asia, particularly for female students. Let's examine this part:

> "*While previous studies including those mentioned above have identified gender differences in the Asian DE contexts, few studies discuss gender mainstreaming that is a globally accepted strategy in tertiary education for promoting gender equality and needs to be reflected in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of all programs (Vimala, 2010).*" **(This opening statement briefly acknowledges the contributions of previous research but points out a significant gap: the lack of focus on gender mainstreaming within the context of distance education in Asia, thereby emphasizing the need for further investigation.)**

> "*Jung (2007) has documented good practices in DE to ensure that learners, especially women, receive institutional support in order to successfully complete their studies. This involves a shift from a provider-centered to a learner-centered approach of student servicing and tutoring and close monitoring.*" **(This section discusses the shift to a learner-centered approach in distance education, highlighting case studies that showcase support systems for female students. This alternative framework addresses some of**

the limitations noted in earlier studies, which often overlooked the specific support needs of women in distance education settings.)

"The present study therefore aimed to elaborate the ARCS model by drawing upon Asian DE students' perceptions of quality support, identify any further dimensions that might be needed in regard to gender, and explore some gender mainstreaming strategies to meet different support needs of female and male DE students in Asia." **(This final sentence outlines the aim of the current study, which seeks to address the limitations of prior research by introducing a more nuanced framework. By focusing on gender-specific support needs, the study advances research on Asian distance learners and provides a more comprehensive understanding of how institutional support can be tailored to promote gender equality.)**

Are you ready to begin writing the first two parts of your Introduction—Background and Research Gaps? In the Background section, aim to review previous studies comprehensively, organizing the content into 3–4 subheadings for clarity. Then, in the Research Gap section, emphasize the specific limitations of prior research that your study will address.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

In the Theoretical Framework section, you will outline the theoretical or conceptual model your research employs to address existing gaps or limitations in knowledge, while also highlighting the new perspectives your study contributes.

For those familiar with research methodology, it is well-established that a theoretical or conceptual framework plays several critical roles. First, it provides the background and context for your study by linking it to existing literature, reinforcing the research's significance and necessity. Second, it clearly defines the research problem and establishes the focus and direction of your study. Third, it serves as the foundation for developing research questions and hypotheses. In quantitative research, in particular, the framework shapes the research design, informs data collection methods, and guides analytical techniques, helping define the key variables and their relationships. In essence, the theoretical or conceptual framework is the backbone of your research, ensuring it is conducted logically, systematically, and coherently. For further details on the theoretical framework, refer to research design books such as Booth et al. (2024) and Creswell and Creswell (2018).

The length of the Theoretical Framework section will depend on how much theoretical background you have introduced earlier in your paper. Typically, this section is around 300–400 words, focusing on the core framework and key concepts. However, if a more detailed explanation is necessary, a longer section may be appropriate. So, what should be included in the Theoretical Framework section, and how can it be effectively written?

What to Include

(1) **Origins and Key Proponents**: Begin by briefly discussing the origins and key proponents of the theory or framework you are using. If other similar theories exist, mention them and succinctly explain why you chose this particular theory for your research. Ensure your explanation convincingly shows how the selected theory is the best fit for addressing your research problem.

(2) **Core Concepts and Structure**: Clearly define the core concepts and structure of your theory or framework. If your framework involves several key concepts, consider using subheadings or sections to explain each one thoroughly. This ensures clarity and allows readers to easily understand the components of your theoretical framework.

(3) **Modifications or Additional Variables**: If you are modifying the existing theory or adding new variables to it, discuss these changes in detail. Explain the rationale for these modifications and why they are necessary for your research. This helps show how your study advances or refines the existing theory to better address your research questions.

(4) **Application to Your Research Topic**: Demonstrate how the selected theory directly applies to your research topic and how it addresses the Research Gap identified earlier. Show how the framework helps provide new insights or perspectives, explaining its relevance and utility for understanding your specific research problem.

How to Write

(1) **Restate the Research Gap Briefly**: If your theoretical framework has already addressed the limitations identified in previous studies, briefly restate these points in the Theoretical Framework section. This concise restatement should remind the reader of the gap in the existing literature and highlight how your framework effectively addresses these shortcomings, reinforcing the relevance of your research.

(2) **Provide Concise Justification**: When justifying your selection of a specific theory over others, keep the explanation focused and to the point. Highlight the main reasons that make this framework uniquely suited to your research question, such as its applicability to your study's objectives or its ability to address previously overlooked factors. Avoid unnecessary detail, but ensure the reader understands why this framework is essential.

(3) **Begin Broad, Then Narrow**: Start by introducing the theory in a broad context, explaining its origins, foundational ideas, and general relevance. Then, progressively narrow your focus to the key concepts or variables that directly relate to your study. This approach ensures a smooth transition from general theory to the specific aspects you will apply, helping the reader follow your logical progression.

(4) **Cite Relevant Studies**: Support your theoretical framework by citing prior studies that have successfully employed similar frameworks. This not only lends credibility to your approach but also shows how your research builds on a foundation of established knowledge. Use these citations to position your study within the broader academic discourse, demonstrating its contribution to the field.

(5) **Ensure Clarity and Precision**: Ensure that your writing is clear and precise. Avoid overcomplicating sentences or introducing jargon unnecessarily. Each sentence should serve a clear purpose, guiding the reader through your theoretical framework with accuracy and clarity, directly connecting it to your research objectives.

(6) **Include Concrete Examples**: Whenever possible, use concrete examples to illustrate how theoretical concepts will be applied in your study. Examples can clarify abstract ideas and make complex theories more accessible to your audience, helping them see the practical relevance of your chosen framework.

(7) **Use Visuals Effectively**: Include a diagram or visual model to represent the theoretical or conceptual framework. This visual should clearly depict key concepts, variables, and their relationships, offering a clearer understanding of the framework's structure. Ensure that all components of the visual are thoroughly explained in the text so readers can easily follow how these elements tie into your research questions or hypotheses.

I trust this refined approach will help you build a strong Theoretical or Conceptual Framework, clearly linking your study to existing research while highlighting its novel contributions.

Example of the Theoretical Framework Section:

An excellent example of a well-constructed Theoretical Framework section can be found in Lee and Jung's (2021) paper. Let's take a closer look at how they integrate Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory into their study.

> "*The ecological systems theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979), served as the theoretical framework for this study. The theory explains how the intrinsic qualities of individuals and their immediate and broader environments interact to influence how they develop and change. Bronfenbrenner's theory organizes environments into four systems with which an individual interacts (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, pp. 514–515): the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system.*" (**This section opens with a clear and concise introduction, immediately informing the reader of the chosen theoretical framework. The use of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is justified by briefly outlining its key premise—that human development is shaped through interactions between individuals and their surrounding environments. By referencing the foundational works of Bronfenbrenner, the authors firmly establish the theoretical basis for their study.**)

> "*The most proximal system to the individual is the micro-system, which refers to the immediate setting where one exists and usually performs a role or activity. Moving outward from*

the microsystem is the meso-system, which incorporates all of one's micro-systems and the processes and interactions between them. The exo-system is the next outermost system, which contains elements of one's environment that one cannot control or effect, often including one's neighborhood and other social and societal structures. The outermost system is the macro-system, which includes one's culture or subculture and, in some cases, one's socio-economic setting, race, and country." **(Here, the authors provide a concise breakdown of the core components of Bronfenbrenner's theory. By explaining each system—the micro, meso, exo, and macro—the authors give the reader a clear understanding of how the ecological systems model is structured. This logical progression from the individual's immediate environment to broader societal influences sets the stage for how the theory will be applied within the context of the study.)**

"In the present study, the individuals in Bronfenbrenner's formulation were South Korean university faculty members who have been obliged to carry out emergency online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Individual factors that were found to be influential in the previous studies were also found to be present in this study: technology acceptance and innovation propensity (Agarwal & Prasad, 1998; Granic, & Marangunic, 2019; Stewart et al., 2010; Thatcher et al, 2007), and teaching perspective (Wingo et al., 2017) along with their gender, age and teaching experience (Allan & Seaman, 2012; Shea, 2007). The immediate setting or microsystem, with which each faculty member interacted, was a course they were required to teach online as a result of the pandemic. It included such factors as instructional objectives, media, and instructional design (Arend, 2009; Chapman, 2011) along with course disciplinary area, course level and class size. The meso-system was the institution in which faculty taught, and included such factors as the size, type, and location of the university (Green et al., 2009), the fidelity of institutional support (Alsofyani et al., 2012; Sumrall, 2002), and organization-level upheaval and nudge strategies employed to cope with the crisis (Almaiah et al., 2020; Ayebi-Arthur, 2017). Factors that were found to be important, mostly for voluntary decisions to accept a technology or online education, such as personal rewards were not included in the study as the context of this present study was in online education as mandatory requirements. The exo-system (e.g., government and national strategies and policies) and macro-system (e.g., national culture) were also not included in the research design, since they were the same across the board for all faculty members involved." **(This paragraph effectively demonstrates how Bronfenbrenner's theory is applied to the specific context of the study. The authors link the key elements of the theory to real-world variables, such as technology acceptance, instructional objectives, and institutional support. By systematically aligning Bronfenbrenner's systems with the study's parameters, the authors create a coherent and logical application of the theoretical framework. Additionally, they acknowledge the limits of their study by excluding the exo- and macro-systems, which were uniform across participants.)**

"Keeping in mind the theoretical notions about individuals and micro and meso-systems of the ecological systems model, we hypothesized that factors at three different system levels: the individual, course, and institutional level interact with each other to affect the instructional changes instigated by faculty, in emergency online teaching. Specifically considered were changes in technology use, teaching behaviors, and beliefs about online teaching in five levels (Fig. 1)." **(This concluding section ties together the theoretical framework and the research hypothesis, showing how Bronfenbrenner's multi-level systems interact to influence faculty behavior. The authors propose that individual, course, and institutional factors converge to shape instructional changes, offering a clear and testable hypothesis. The inclusion of a visual representation in Fig. 1 provides a concrete depiction of the theoretical framework, enhancing the reader's understanding of the relationships between the variables.)**

Research Questions

The Research Questions section is a vital component of your research paper, acting as the link between the Introduction and the Results/Findings sections. For this section to be effective, it must clearly reflect the context outlined in the Introduction and be in alignment with the theoretical framework guiding your study. Crafting research questions thoughtfully ensures that your study remains focused and addresses the identified research gap. Below are key elements to include when writing this section.

What to Include

(1) **Broad Overarching Aim**: Start by stating the broad, overarching research aim that encapsulates the main purpose of your study. This serves as a general guide to what your research intends to achieve. If this aim has already been introduced in earlier sections (such as the Background), there is no need to repeat it in detail here, but a brief restatement can help frame the research questions.

(2) **Main Research Questions**: Present the primary research questions that your study aims to answer. These questions should naturally arise from your theoretical framework and address the research gap identified in your Introduction. Ensure that each question is clearly and precisely formulated, guiding the reader toward the central areas of investigation. Well-crafted questions serve as the roadmap for your research, helping to focus both the inquiry and the analysis.

(3) **Sub-questions (If Necessary)**: If your main research questions are broad, you may need to break them down into more specific sub-questions. These sub-questions can help explore different dimensions of your topic in greater depth, ensuring that the investigation is comprehensive and that each aspect of the research problem is addressed. Sub-questions should be closely related to the primary questions and provide further clarity without overcomplicating the inquiry.

(4) **Hypotheses (If Applicable)**: If your study involves hypotheses, clearly state them in this section. Hypotheses should be directly related to the research questions and rooted in the theoretical framework of your study. They represent specific, testable statements that your research will either confirm or disprove. Alternatively, hypotheses may also be integrated into the theoretical framework discussion if that is a more natural fit for your paper's structure.

How to Write

(1) **Ensure Clarity and Precision**: Ensure your research questions are clear, direct, and easily understood. Avoid vague terms or complicated expressions that

could confuse readers. Keep each question simple, using concise language that communicates your inquiry at first glance.

(2) **Highlight Originality and Relevance**: Frame your research questions to emphasize the originality of your study by directly addressing the research gap identified in your Introduction. Your questions should also offer new insights or perspectives on existing theories or phenomena, making a meaningful contribution to the field.

(3) **Align with Theoretical Framework**: Your research questions must align closely with your theoretical framework. Use consistent terminology and avoid introducing new concepts that have not been discussed earlier. This alignment ensures coherence between the theory and the research inquiry.

(4) **Assess Feasibility and Scope**: Make sure your research questions are feasible, meaning they can be realistically answered given the available time, resources, and access to data. The number of research questions should also match the scope of your study, maybe 2–3 for smaller studies and up to 4–5 for more comprehensive investigations.

(5) **Maintain Conciseness and Focus**: Be concise and direct, aiming for around 100–150 words per question or group of questions. If your study covers a complex topic, break it down into sub-questions to simplify your approach. Your questions should lead naturally to result-oriented answers that will be addressed in the Findings or Results section.

Example of the Research Questions Section

A well-crafted example of how a theoretical framework can shape research questions is found on page 5 of the paper by Lee and Jung (2021). This section illustrates the direct relationship between the theoretical framework and the formulation of research questions:

"*We applied our theoretical framework in developing the following research questions.*" **(This introductory sentence clearly and succinctly communicates that the research questions were derived from the theoretical framework, ensuring alignment between the conceptual foundation and the research inquiry).**

"*Research Question 1: To what extent did university faculty change their emergency online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of: (1) technology use, (2) teaching behaviors, and (3) beliefs about online teaching?*" **(This question is intricately tied to the theoretical framework, which likely explores how external and internal factors, such as technology and pedagogical shifts, influence teaching practices. The three components— technology use, teaching behaviors, and beliefs—are central concepts that reflect the broader theories underpinning the study. By breaking the inquiry into these specific elements, the question is both comprehensive and aligned with the theoretical constructs guiding the research.)**

"*Research Question 2: How did factors at individual, course, and institutional levels contribute to the changes that faculty instituted in their emergency online teaching?*" **(This second question also reflects the multi-level theoretical framework. It breaks down the analysis into three interconnected layers: individual, course, and institutional levels.**

This approach suggests that the theoretical framework accounts for multiple dimensions influencing faculty behavior. By framing the question this way, the authors ensure that their inquiry captures the complexity of the factors outlined in their theoretical model.)

As demonstrated in this example, the alignment between the theoretical framework and the research questions ensures coherence in the study, allowing the framework to guide both data collection and analysis.

Checklist: Essential Guidelines for Writing a Research Introduction

- Start with a broad overview of the research topic in the Background section, gradually narrowing the focus to the specific research problem.
- Clearly state the research gap in the Research Gaps section, highlighting what is missing in the literature and why your study is significant.
- Introduce relevant theories or concepts in the Theoretical Framework section to guide and support your study.
- Define your research objectives in the Research Questions/Objectives section, explaining how they address the identified gap.
- Ensure logical flow and coherence between sections to enhance readability and clarity throughout the introduction.

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Chapter 12
Week 6: Writing the Quantitative Methods Section

Abstract This chapter focuses on writing the quantitative methods section, a critical part of any quantitative research paper. Often referred to as the "heart" of the study, the methodology must ensure the validity and reliability of findings. A well-structured methods section outlines the study's scope and limitations, guiding readers on how the research was conducted. In earlier chapters, particularly Chap. 8, I recommended that the methods section comprises roughly 15% or 900 words of a 6000-word paper and be divided into four key subsections: Research Design, Participants, Instruments, and Data Collection and Analysis. This chapter provides strategies to structure these subsections effectively. These sections can be adjusted to fit the unique characteristics of your research.

Research Design

The Research Design section is crucial for explaining the overall design of your study. This part should clearly define the type of research design you are using and justify its selection in relation to your research problem.

What to Include

(1) **Type of Research Design**: Specify whether your study uses an experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, causal-comparative design, or another design. Keep the explanation concise, providing more detail only if your design is particularly novel or complex.
(2) **Rationale for Design Choice**: Briefly explain why this specific design was chosen. The design should align with your research questions and objectives.

If the rationale for your chosen design has already been explained earlier in the paper or is commonly understood by your readers, it can be omitted to prevent redundancy.

(3) **Implementation of the Design**: Describe how the chosen design was carried out in your study. For instance, you could mention participant selection or how variables were controlled. However, if other sections, such as data collection, cover these details, it is better to focus on summarizing the implementation briefly in this section.

How to Write

(1) **Start with a Direct Statement**: Begin by clearly stating the type of research design used in your study (e.g., "This study employed a quasi-experimental design…"). This allows the reader to quickly understand the study's approach.

(2) **Be Concise**: The explanation of your research design should be succinct, typically within 50–100 words. Avoid unnecessary detail unless the design is uncommon or requires further clarification. The explanation should be straightforward, providing just enough information to inform the reader about the structure and methodology used in your study.

(3) **Focus on Relevance**: Only include information about the research design that directly impacts the understanding of your study. For example, if the implementation details (like random assignment or control measures) are crucial for understanding the design, include them. If they are covered in other sections, a short reference to those sections will suffice.

(4) **Avoid Over-explaining**: If the research design is well-known and its details are common knowledge in your field, there is no need to provide an in-depth explanation. A simple acknowledgment of the design and a brief note on its relevance to your study are sufficient.

Examples of the Research Design Section

Example 1 straightforwardly explains the research design of a study investigating the impact of a new teaching method on student learning performance:

"We employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of a new teaching method on student performance." (**This sentence clearly specifies the type of research design used in the study.**)

"This design was selected because it allows for comparison between groups while accommodating variables that cannot be experimentally controlled in a real-world school setting, such as class sizes or existing teaching practices." (**The rationale for choosing this design is provided. While including more specific details could strengthen the explanation, it may be unnecessary, as the advantages of a quasi-experimental design are well-known. Therefore, this part can be omitted to avoid redundancy.**)

"The study involved two groups: one exposed to the traditional teaching method and the other to the new method, both over the course of a semester." (**This sentence briefly explains how the design was implemented, offering an overview of the comparative group setup.**)

"Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Board of the first author's university prior to the study's commencement, ensuring compliance with ethical standards." (**This sentence addresses how ethical considerations were managed. While this could be mentioned here, it might be more appropriate to include it in a separate section such as Participants or Data Collection.**)

Example 2 offers a clear explanation of the research design section:

"This study utilizes an ex post facto correlational-predictive design with a cross-sectional approach. The design examines pre-existing differences and relationships between specific variables." (**The type of research design is specified, and its nature is briefly introduced.**)

"Specifically, the study explores how educational attainment, the primary independent variable, affects job satisfaction, with the quality and quantity of workplace interactions acting as *the mediator variable."* (**It explains how this design is applied, clearly identifying the key variables involved.**)

"Through covariation and regression analysis, the research aims to validate a mediation model where workplace interactions explain the influence of educational attainment on job satisfaction." (**This final sentence ties the research design to the overall goal of the study. It explains how statistical methods like regression analysis will be used to test the hypothesized mediation model.**)

Participants

This section provides a detailed description of the people who participated in the study, how they were selected, and their key characteristics. Information obtained from the participants' surveys will be presented here.

What to Include

(1) **Methods and Criteria for Participant Selection**: Clearly explain how participants were recruited, including the methods used (e.g., random sampling, convenience sampling) and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. If specific groups were targeted, describe why these criteria were relevant to your study.
(2) **Number of Participants**: Provide the total number of participants involved in the study. If the sample includes different subgroups, such as control and experimental groups, specify the number of participants in each.
(3) **Demographic Information About Participants**: Include key characteristics such as age, gender, education level, experience, or other relevant demographics. This type of information is typically available after data collection, which leads some researchers to report it in the Results section. However, I recommend

including it here in the Participants section to give readers a clearer under-
standing of the research context and the representativeness of the sample before
they review the results.

How to Write

(1) **Be Concise and Specific**: Aim for around 200–300 words to describe partici-
pants. Be clear and direct in stating the relevant demographic and recruitment
information, ensuring that all essential details are included without overloading
the section with unnecessary data.

(2) **Include Major Participant Information**: Unless specific participant charac-
teristics are central to your research questions, all key details about the partici-
pants should be presented in the Methods section, as recommended earlier. This
prevents redundancy in the Results section unless participants' demographical
characteristics play a role in the study's findings.

(3) **Be Transparent**: Clearly explain any inclusion or exclusion criteria used to
select participants. If there were any challenges in recruiting participants, be
sure to mention them as well. Providing this information adds transparency to
your research process, helping the reader understand who the participants were
and how they were selected.

Examples of the Participants Section

Example 1 is adapted from Lee and Jung (2021).

"*A total of 201 university educators at higher education institutions, located in South Korea,
participated in this study.*" (**This sentence introduces the participants by providing the
number, type, and general location of the participants, indicating diversity across
institutions. A brief explanation of the selection method could have been provided.**)

"*The sample comprised 58.26% (n = 117) women, 40.8% (n = 82) men, and 1% (n = 2)
who preferred not to state their gender.*" (**This sentence presents the gender distribution
of the participants.**)

"*In regard to age, 6.0% (n = 12) of participants were in their thirties, 39.8% (n = 80) in
their forties, 43.3% (n = 87) in their fifties, and 10.9% (n = 22) in their sixties.*" (**Age
distribution is clearly provided, giving insight into the age range of participants.**)

"*Teaching experience was relatively evenly distributed, with 8.5% (n = 17) with less than
5 years of teaching experience, 23.9% (n = 48) 6 to 10 years, 20.4% (n = 41) 11 to 15
years, 15.9% (n = 32) 16 to 19 years, and 31.3% (n = 63) more than 20 years.*" (**Teaching
experience is reported with specific percentages for a clearer understanding of the
distribution across various experience levels.**)

"*Most participants (80.6%, n = 162) could be considered to be at the beginner level of
online teaching, with most at this level (69.2%, n = 139) having no experience prior to
COVID-19 and a smaller number at this level (11.4%, n = 23) having less than one year*

of online teaching experience." **(Participants' online teaching experience is emphasized, which is relevant to the study's focus on education during the pandemic.)**

"Among the participants, 56.2% (n = 113) taught courses in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, 36.8% (n = 74) taught courses in engineering, sciences, and medical disciplines, and 7.0% (n = 14) taught multi-disciplinary courses." **(The fields of specialization give insight into the academic diversity of participants.)**

"Course sizes were diverse: 3.0% (n = 6) of courses contained less than 10 students, 40.8% (n = 82) had 10 to 30 students, 31.8% (n = 64) had 31 to 50 students, 19.4% (n = 39) had 51 to 100 students, and 5.0% (n = 10) had more than 100 students." **(The course size distribution highlights the teaching environments in which the participants worked.)**

"Institution sizes ranged from less than 10,000 students (62.7%, n = 126) to more than 10,000 students (37.3%, n = 75)." **(This provides additional context by detailing the size of the institutions involved.)**

Note: Although the participant characteristics are presented within the text, using a table format alongside the narrative could improve clarity and reader comprehension.

Example 2 is adapted from Tagimaucia et al. (2024).

"The study focused on 35 secondary school PE teachers in Fiji who were actively engaged in online teaching during the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 and 2021." **(This sentence clearly introduces the participants by profession and context, immediately specifying the study's focus.)**

"The participants were invited through professional and social networks using convenience sampling and snowballing techniques. The snowballing method allowed for a more diverse sample." **(This sentence provides details on the participant recruitment methods, explaining how they contributed to sample diversity.)**

"The study ensured the inclusion of participants from various school settings across Fiji through a randomized selection process." **(This sentence explains the inclusion method, ensuring representation from different settings.)**

"A consent form was included with the survey, detailing inclusion criteria, purpose of the study, time required, and participants' right to withdraw." **(This sentence addresses ethical considerations, explaining how participants were informed about the study and their rights.)**

"PETs employed in Fijian secondary or high schools were included." **(This sentence clarifies the occupational characteristics of the participants.)**

"Participants answered open-ended and online survey questions." **(The method of data collection is briefly mentioned here.)**

Note: Although demographic information was reported in the Results section in this example, it is recommended to present this information in the Participants section of the methodology for better clarity. A table is also used in this study to complement the text.

Instruments

The title of this section, which details the research tools, can be labeled as "Instrument," "Instruments," "Measurement," or "Measurements," depending on whether you are referring to a single tool or multiple tools.

What to Include

(1) **Description of Each Data Collection Tool**: In this section, provide a clear description of all the data collection tools used in your study, such as surveys, questionnaires, test papers, structured observation sheets, or experimental booklets. For each tool, explain its purpose within the research. If you used multiple tools, I recommend using subheadings for each one, as I find this approach significantly improves readability and organization.

(2) **Development or Selection Process**: Explain how each tool was developed or selected. If you designed the tool yourself, provide details on the stages of development, from initial conception to finalization. If you used pre-existing tools, explain how and why you selected them, noting any modifications made to align with your study's objectives. Also, be sure to mention that you obtained the necessary permissions to use these tools.

(3) **Validity and Reliability Testing**: This Instruments section should also include details on how the validity and reliability of each tool were tested. Validity refers to how well a tool measures what it is intended to measure, while reliability refers to the consistency of the results when the tool is used repeatedly under similar conditions. Make sure to include the results of these tests, whether through pilot studies, statistical methods, or expert evaluations.

How to Write

(1) **Use Subheadings for Clarity**: If you have multiple data collection tools, consider using subheadings to break up the section and discuss each tool individually, as recommended earlier. This enhances readability and allows readers to easily find specific information related to each instrument.

(2) **Provide Detail, but Keep it Concise**: While the Instruments section should typically be around 500–600 words, it can vary based on the complexity of your tools. If you have several tools or if they were developed through extensive processes, include sufficient detail to explain their development and validation. However, if your study used standardized tools or if a lengthy explanation is unnecessary, keep this section concise. The key is to ensure that all essential information is covered without overwhelming the reader with unnecessary detail.

(3) **Emphasize Validity and Reliability**: Always highlight how you ensured the validity and reliability of the tools, as these are crucial elements of your research's credibility. Be specific about the methods used for testing, such as conducting pilot studies, using statistical tests like Cronbach's Alpha for reliability, or seeking expert reviews for content validity. Where applicable, include relevant data or results to support your claims.

Example of the Instruments Section

This example is from Wang (2023). In the Methodology section of the paper, the "Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire Development" part provides a concise yet detailed explanation of the instrument used in the study. The section is around 200 words long and clearly outlines the research tool, making it easy for readers to understand. When only one research tool is utilized, a structure like this can be effective.

"This study used a questionnaire to collect data from undergraduates with different academic backgrounds." **(This sentence introduces the type of data collection tool—questionnaire—and specifies the participant group, implying the study aims to gather diverse perspectives.)**

"The questionnaire consisted of two parts—demographic information and a MOOC survey." **(This specifies the two-part structure of the questionnaire, ensuring readers understand the clear division between background data and main research variables.)**

"The demographic questions addressed five aspects: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) number of MOOC diplomas, (d) academic background, and (e) academic year." **(Here, the specific demographic factors collected are outlined, focusing on variables that could influence responses, such as prior MOOC experience.)**

"The MOOC survey measured the variables of PU, PEOU, ATT, SN, PBC, and BI. A five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was provided for each MOOC survey item. In total, 28 items were presented as independent and dependent variables." **(This sentence identifies the core variables of interest, linking them to established theoretical constructs and indicating the quantitative nature of the data through the Likert scale.)**

"To better predict students' perception and behavioral intention regarding MOOCs, all the items for measuring the constructs of PU, PEOU, ATT, SN, PBC, and BI were based on Chin et al. (2008), Venkatesh and Goyal (2010), Venkatesh et al. (2011), Zhou (2016), and Lung-Guang (2019)." **(This part explains the adaptation of well-known, validated scales to measure the key constructs, which increases the validity and reliability of the tool.)**

"Additionally, suggestions were sought from content experts on how students perceive MOOCs." **(Expert feedback was used to ensure the questions were relevant and accurately captured student perceptions, further enhancing the validity of the tool.)**

"Of the 28 items on the MOOC survey (see Appendix), (a) five items addressed PU, (b) four items related to PEOU, (c) eight items applied to ATT, (d) three items dealt with SN, (e) five items applied to PBC, and (f) three items focused on BI." **(This final sentence provides a breakdown of the questionnaire's structure, giving transparency about how each construct was measured. The inclusion of the full survey in the appendix supports the study's transparency.)**

Data Collection and Analysis

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the procedures used for data collection and the methods employed for data analysis.

What to Include

(1) **Details on Data Collection Procedures**: Clearly describe the timeline and process of data collection, including when and how the data were collected. Specify the methods used, whether surveys, interviews, observations, or other techniques, and mention the setting or context of data collection. This gives readers a clear understanding of the logistics and scope of the research.

(2) **Information on Data Collectors and Participants**: Identify who collected the data and provide details about the participants. Include relevant information about the people involved in data collection, such as whether they were researchers, assistants, or external personnel. Additionally, describe the participants, including how they were selected, to contextualize the data collection process.

(3) **Tools and Methods for Data Analysis**: Specify the tools, software, and techniques used to analyze the data. Whether you employed statistical software like SPSS or qualitative analysis software like NVivo, this should be made clear. Also, mention the data analysis methods applied, such as descriptive statistics, regression analysis, thematic analysis, or coding, depending on whether the study is quantitative or qualitative.

How to Write

(1) **Be Concise but Comprehensive**: While this section can typically be covered in about 100–200 words, make sure to provide enough detail for clarity. Briefly outline the key elements of your data collection procedures, but avoid overloading the section with unnecessary specifics. Stick to essential details like the timeframe, methods, and participants, ensuring the reader understands the overall process.

(2) **Use Clear and Logical Organization**: Structure your explanation logically, starting with data collection and moving to data analysis. In my case, I first explain the timeline and methods used for data collection, followed by details on who collected the data and the participants involved. I then move on to describe the tools, software, and analysis methods. I find that this step-by-step approach enhances clarity and flow in my writing.

(3) **Keep the Explanation Simple Yet Specific**: When discussing data analysis techniques and tools, keep the explanation clear and specific, ensuring readers

can understand the methodology without needing extensive technical knowledge beforehand.

Examples of the Data Collection and Analysis Section

Example 1 has a straightforward structure, making it easy to follow. By using each sentence in this example as a model, you can efficiently write the data collection and analysis section for your research.

"Data were collected from March to June 2024 through online surveys administered to students via their school email addresses. Each participant completed the survey during a scheduled class period under teacher supervision." (**This sentence efficiently summarizes the key aspects of data collection: the time frame, method, and participants. It gives the reader a clear understanding of when and how data were collected, as well as the controlled environment in which it occurred, ensuring the quality of responses.**)

"Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were calculated for demographic data, and an independent t-test was performed to compare the test scores of the two groups. Additionally, thematic analysis was applied to open-ended responses to identify common themes related to student experiences with the new teaching method." (**This sentence concisely explains the software used and the statistical methods employed. It outlines both quantitative and qualitative analyses, providing clarity on how the data were processed.**)

Example 2 is taken from Han and Sa (2022) and shows more complex data collection and analysis content. If you have written the data collection and analysis section concisely, as in Example 1, you can expand on it by following the structure in Example 2.

"*Data were collected through an online questionnaire survey of university students taking distance/online classes, who were selected through convenience sampling, from December 9 to December 16, 2020.*" (**This sentence explains the timing and target participants for data collection, offering more detail by including the selection method. Convenience sampling indicates that the respondents were chosen based on availability, which is important for understanding the representativeness of the sample.**)

"The respondents were recruited through EM-Brain, a company specializing in online surveys. The survey was emailed to registered users of the company." (**This elaborates on the data collection process, specifying that an external service was used to distribute the survey, adding transparency to the recruitment procedure.**)

"The contents of the questionnaire and the purpose of the research were provided to each recipient prior to the completion of the questionnaire. Only recipients who confirmed that they were enrolled as college students and were currently taking online classes were allowed to complete the questionnaire. The survey was terminated for those who responded they that were not college students or did not take online classes." (**This section provides details on how the survey ensured relevance by filtering participants. By requiring confirmation of enrollment, the study ensured that only eligible participants could complete the survey, which strengthens the data's validity.**)

"All the responses were anonymous." (**This sentence emphasizes the ethical considerations taken during data collection, ensuring that respondents' anonymity was protected.**)

"The target sample for this study was 671 students; however, only 313 fully completed the survey." (**This specifies the intended sample size and the actual number of participants, providing transparency about the response rate and any potential limitations due to incomplete data.**)

"Data analysis was performed using SPSS and AMOS software." (**This sentence identifies the software used for data analysis, showing that multiple tools were employed to handle different aspects of the analysis.**)

"First, a frequency analysis was performed to examine the demographic characteristics of the survey participants. Confirmatory factor analysis was then conducted for each item to verify the validity and reliability of the survey tool, and Cronbach's α coefficient was calculated to ensure internal consistency between the items. Moreover, a correlation analysis was performed to investigate the correlation and multicollinearity of each factor with the confirmed unidimensionality of satisfaction and acceptance intention with TAM. To test the research hypotheses, a path analysis using structural equation modeling was performed, through which each hypothesis was either supported or rejected." (**This section comprehensively outlines the methods used in the data analysis, including both exploratory and confirmatory analyses. By detailing the use of confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's α, the authors demonstrate a rigorous approach to verifying the reliability and validity of the survey items. The inclusion of correlation analysis and path analysis further illustrates the complexity of the statistical approach to test the research hypotheses.**)

Checklist: Key Strategies for Writing a Quantitative Methods Section

- Divide the methods section into four key subsections: Research Design, Participants, Instruments, and Data Collection and Analysis.
- Clearly state the research design and explain why it is appropriate for your study.
- Provide details on participant recruitment, including sampling methods, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and relevant demographic information related to your research questions.
- Describe each data collection tool, its purpose, and how it was selected or developed, highlighting validity, reliability, and any pilot studies or expert reviews.
- Outline the data collection procedures, including when, where, and how data were collected.
- Specify the software and tools used for data analysis, justify the statistical methods applied, and ensure enough detail is provided for replication.
- Address ethical considerations, such as informed consent and participant confidentiality.

References

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Chapter 13
Week 7: Writing the Qualitative Methods Section

Abstract In the previous chapter, we explored strategies for crafting the methodology section of a quantitative research paper. This chapter focuses on writing the methodology section of a qualitative research paper, highlighting the importance of a detailed and transparent account of the research process. While both qualitative and quantitative methodologies require systematic approaches, the writing strategies for each differ in certain key areas. For qualitative studies, the methodology should cover the Research Design, Context, Participants, and Data Collection and Analysis. This chapter provides strategies for writing each of these parts, with appropriate examples. For a 6000-word paper, I recommend allocating around 900 words (or 15% of the total) to the Methods section of a qualitative research paper. Unlike in quantitative studies, Instruments or Measurement sections are typically unnecessary in qualitative research.

Keywords Context · Data collection and analysis · Participants · Qualitative research · Researcher positionality

Research Design

The Research Design section outlines the structure of your study, clearly defining the research design (e.g., ethnography, case study, grounded theory) and justifying its selection based on your research problem. Explain how the chosen design aligns with your study's objectives and supports addressing your research questions. Highlight why qualitative methods are suitable, focusing on their ability to capture complex, contextual data. Briefly mention key characteristics of the design, such as immersion in the field for ethnography or theory development in grounded theory, demonstrating how it fits the specific demands of your study. I will not be adding further details to this section, aside from one example, as most of the suggestions provided for writing a quantitative methods section in Chap. 13 are also applicable to this qualitative section.

Example of the Research Design Section

This example from Jung et al. (2021) provides a concise introduction to the research design at the beginning of the methodology section.

> *"The researchers embarked on a qualitative study consisting of autoethnographies of themselves as research participants in the study to generate empirical data."* **(This sentence explains the researchers' qualitative approach, where they use autoethnography to analyze their own experiences as data, offering personal insights within a cultural context.)**
>
> *"Autoethnography is defined as a form of personal narrative that explores the author's lived experiences (Mallet, 2011) and is considered "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1)."* **(This sentence briefly defines autoethnography as a method that merges personal reflection with cultural analysis, helping readers understand the rationale behind selecting this approach.)**

Context (or Setting)

In qualitative research, a detailed description of the context in which the study was conducted is vital to help readers understand the conditions under which data were collected and their significance to the research questions. By providing this background, researchers offer a foundation for interpreting the findings and understanding the study's broader implications.

The Context (or Setting) section serves to describe the research environment, offering essential details that influence the study's outcomes. By understanding the setting, readers gain a clearer understanding of how particular variables or circumstances may have impacted the data collection, the participants' experiences, and the overall findings. Therefore, it is often recommended to begin the methodology section of a qualitative research paper with a thorough description of this aspect. Whether you choose to call this section "Context" or "Setting" depends on the specific nature of your research.

What to Include

(1) **Broader Environment**: Begin by describing the broad environment in which the research was conducted. This could include the geographical location, the type of institution or organization, and the community setting (e.g., urban, rural, suburban).

(2) **Relevant Factors**: Discuss any factors that might have influenced your research, such as historical, cultural, or social influences. These could affect participant behavior, responses, and the dynamics within the setting.

(3) **Importance of Context**: Explain why this particular context is critical to your research questions. How does the setting contribute to the unique insights or data gathered? This can clarify for readers why the specific environment was chosen and how it adds depth to your study.

How to Write

(1) **Be Descriptive Yet Concise**: Provide enough detail to give the reader a vivid picture of the setting without overwhelming them. Focus only on information that adds value to the research. In several instances, I have recommended balancing detail with brevity. You might wonder what that involves. The best way to understand this balance is by reviewing papers published in reputable journals, where you can see concrete examples of how it is achieved.
(2) **Use Specific Details**: Include specific, concrete details of key aspects that enable readers to clearly visualize the environment. Generalities may fail to convey the significance of the setting, so be precise in your description.
(3) **Avoid Jargon**: Ensure your language is clear and easy to understand. Avoid unnecessary technical terms unless they are crucial to understanding the context. The goal is for both specialized and non-specialized readers to understand the setting.
(4) **Cite Previous Research**: Where possible, cite existing literature to support your description of the setting or environment. Prior studies in similar contexts can add credibility and provide a basis for understanding your research choices.
(5) **Maintain Appropriate Word Count**: Aim for 100–200 words. In more complex studies, a longer explanation may be warranted, but concise descriptions are often sufficient to cover the key aspects of the setting.

Examples of the Context Section

Example 1 highlights research conducted in a diverse academic institution:

"The study was conducted in a small private liberal arts college in Tokyo, Japan." (**This sentence introduces the broader environment of the study, providing geographic and institutional context.**)

"This college serves a diverse student population, with approximately 50% of students identifying as Japanese, 10% as Chinese, 10% as Korean, 10% as other Asian, 10% as Caucasian, and 10% as Hispanic. Over the past eight years, the college has implemented various diversity and inclusive education policies to support its diverse students." (**This part focuses on the composition of the student body and highlights the college's environment, which is relevant to the research topic.**)

"This context provided a rich environment for exploring faculty's perceptions and practices regarding diversity and inclusive education." (**Here, the significance of the setting to the research question is emphasized, explaining why this environment was ideal for studying perceptions and practices around diversity and inclusive education.**)

Example 2, adapted from Park et al. (2015), centers around research conducted within an online learning context:

> *"We enrolled in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and kept journals regarding our learning experiences and observations."* **(This sentence describes the specific research environment—the MOOCs—where the data were collected. It helps situate the study within the context of digital learning.)**

> *"We had total freedom in regard to which MOOCs to study since this is "what individuals do when they undertake open learning out of their own volition" (Veletsianos, 2013, p. 4)."* **(This part explains the autonomy participants had in selecting MOOCs, citing prior research to provide theoretical support and show that voluntary participation was key to understanding learners' behaviors in this context.)**

> *"Table 2 shows the courses taken by participants A, B, and C."* **(Rather than describing the courses in the text, the research uses a table to outline the characteristics of the MOOCs participants chose, which adds structure to the contextual information.)**

Participants

The Participants section is essential for detailing how the research subjects were chosen and providing demographic and statistical information. It allows readers to assess the appropriateness of the sample and the generalizability of the findings. A thorough description helps others understand the composition of the participants and the relevance to the research questions.

What to Include

(1) **Selection Criteria**: Clearly define how participants were selected, including any specific characteristics or qualifications that were required for inclusion in the study. This could be based on age, education level, occupation, or other relevant factors.

(2) **Recruitment Process and Ethics**: Describe how participants were recruited for the study, such as through voluntary sign-up, targeted outreach, or convenience sampling. Also, address ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the protection of participants' rights.

(3) **Statistical Information**: Provide relevant demographic and statistical details, such as age, gender, ethnicity, education level, or other pertinent characteristics of the participants. These details help readers understand the sample and its relevance to the population being studied.

(4) **Participant Details**: Specify the total number of participants and any other relevant details that may affect the interpretation of the findings. For instance, if participants came from different socioeconomic backgrounds or regions, these differences should be noted.

How to Write

(1) **Organize Clearly and Logically**: Organize the section in a clear and logical structure to ensure it is easy for readers to follow. Begin with the selection criteria, proceed with the recruitment process, and conclude with the statistical details.

(2) **Enhance Clarity for Better Understanding**: Use simple, straightforward language to ensure that the section is accessible to a wider audience. Avoid using unnecessary jargon or overly technical terms that could confuse or alienate readers who may not have specialized knowledge. The goal is to make the content easy to understand while still conveying the essential information on participants accurately and effectively.

(3) **Use Visual Aids Effectively**: Consider presenting demographic details using tables or charts to make the data easier to interpret. This can provide a quick, clear view of participant characteristics without overwhelming the text.

(4) **Maintain Appropriate Word Count**: Craft a concise section of 200–300 words on participants that includes all essential information without being overly lengthy. Present the key participant details in the text, while using tables or charts to display more detailed information. This approach will help readers to quickly grasp the critical aspects while providing further insights through visual data representation.

Examples of the Participants Section

Example 1 discusses a study conducted at a diverse liberal arts college, focusing on faculty members' experiences:

> *"The study included 15 faculty members from the liberal arts college, chosen through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse range of experience levels and academic disciplines. This intentional selection aimed to capture a variety of perspectives, enhancing the depth and reliability of the study's findings."* **(This sentence explains how participants were chosen—purposive sampling—and why diversity in experience levels was important for the study's credibility. The study aimed for a comprehensive range of perspectives to enhance reliability.)**

> *"The sample consisted of 7 female and 8 male professors, aged between 32 and 63, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to 30 years. This balanced demographic was selected to represent a wide range of perspectives, incorporating insights from both early-career and experienced educators."* **(This part highlights the importance of demographic variety— gender, age, and experience—which was balanced to ensure a representative sample. The range of teaching experience helps capture a broad spectrum of insights, from those newly entering the field to veteran educators.)**

> *"Prior to participation, all faculty members provided written informed consent, ensuring strict adherence to ethical guidelines. They were assured that their responses during interviews and observations would remain anonymous and confidential, creating a trusting environment that encouraged candid and open discussions. By emphasizing ethical standards, the study safeguarded participants' rights and enhanced the quality and validity of the data*

collected.'' **(This section highlights the ethical measures taken—written consent, confidentiality, and anonymity—which were essential for fostering an open environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences. The emphasis on ethical rigor strengthens the credibility of the research process.)**

Example 2, adapted from Jung and Hong (2016), presents a qualitative study that explores faculty members' priorities when adopting Open Educational Resources (OER). In qualitative research, particularly in case studies, the term "Cases" is often used instead of "Participants" when the focus is on a detailed examination of individual instances or entities.

"Cases were solicited across various regions via three resource persons: an editor-in-chief of an international journal on open education, a South Africa-based OER strategist, and an OER developer and researcher in an Asian distance teaching university." **(This sentence explains how the cases were recruited, leveraging key contacts with expertise in OER adoption to ensure a diverse selection of participants from various geographic and institutional backgrounds. These connections provided access to relevant cases from around the world.)**

"The cases were to concern faculty making regular use of OER in their teaching and learning. They were also to be from different regions and cultures. Of the ten cases finally selected, four were from Asia, two from North America, two from Africa, and two from Europe." **(This part specifies the selection criteria, emphasizing the regular use of OER by faculty and the importance of geographic and cultural diversity. By selecting cases from multiple continents, the study aims to explore cross-regional variations in OER adoption.)**

"The faculty surveyed varied in their teaching experiences and level of OER adoption. Some simply used YouTube videos while others revised and repurposed existing OER to meet their own teaching needs." **(This highlights the diversity within the cases, particularly in how faculty members adopted and used OER.)**

"In all cases, individual faculty members made the final decision to use OER for their own teaching. However, in cases 1, 3, 7, 8, and 9, OER adoption was largely supported and facilitated at the institutional level, while in cases 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10, it was solely based on an individual instructor's decision and effort." **(This part provides insight into the variation in OER adoption, showing that in some cases, institutions played a key role in supporting OER use, while in others, individual faculty members were the primary drivers. This variation is crucial to understanding the dynamics of OER integration across different cases.)**

"Table 1 presents an overview of the 10 cases adopted." **(Here, the research organizes key participant/case details into a table, offering a clear, at-a-glance summary of case characteristics. This enhances reader comprehension by presenting data in an easily digestible format.)**

Data Collection and Analysis

The Data Collection and Analysis section is fundamental for explaining how research data were gathered, processed, and interpreted. Providing a detailed account in this section allows readers to assess the study's rigor, transparency, and overall quality (Korstjens and Moser 2017). Instead of merging data collection and analysis into a single part, you can present them as two separate parts. This allows for a more detailed and organized presentation.

What to Include

(1) **Data Collection**: Start by detailing the methods used for collecting data, such as interviews, surveys, observations, or document analysis. Clearly describe the instruments or tools used, such as interview guides, survey questionnaires, or observation checklists, and explain why these instruments were appropriate for your research. Additionally, outline the procedures followed during data collection, including the duration of interviews, the setting, the frequency of data collection, and how access to participants was obtained.

(2) **Data Analysis**: Clearly state the analytical approach employed, such as thematic analysis, content analysis, or grounded theory, and justify why it was selected. Also, outline the specific stages of analysis, such as coding the data, categorizing it, and interpreting the results. Be sure to describe whether software, like NVivo or MAXQDA, was used for qualitative data analysis. Ensure transparency by explaining how reliability and validity were ensured in the analysis. This may include methods like triangulation, member checking, or inter-coder reliability to ensure consistent interpretation of the data.

How to Write

(1) **Provide Detailed and Specific Information**: Offer a comprehensive, step-by-step account of how data were collected and analyzed. The goal is to ensure transparency and replicability, allowing future researchers to understand and, if necessary, reproduce your approach in their own work.

(2) **Include Key Examples**: Illustrate the nature of the data collected by providing examples of key questions or prompts used during interviews or other data collection methods. This helps demonstrate the alignment of your questions with your research objectives and offers readers a clearer picture of the depth and scope of your data. While detailed examples add context, the full interview guide or survey tool can be placed in an appendix to avoid overwhelming the main text.

(3) **Clarify the Analysis Process**: Clearly describe the methods used to analyze the data. Explain how raw data were processed—such as coding techniques, the identification of themes or patterns, and the categorization of findings. Providing this level of detail ensures that other researchers can follow your methodology and potentially apply it to similar studies, contributing to the overall rigor and consistency of the research.

(4) **Ensure Alignment with Research Questions**: Make sure that every step of your data collection and analysis is closely aligned with your research questions or hypotheses. Clearly show how the methods you used help address the core objectives of your study. This alignment is essential for maintaining the coherence of your research and ensuring that your findings are directly relevant to the questions you set out to answer.

(5) **Maintain Appropriate Word Count**: Qualitative research, in particular, often requires a more detailed explanation of both the data collection and analysis processes. Aim to provide sufficient depth by dedicating 400–600 words to this part, ensuring that readers understand your approach while maintaining the clarity and conciseness necessary for academic writing. This word count allows for thorough explanation without becoming overly wordy.

Example of the Data Collection and Analysis Section

This example, adapted from Choi et al. (2023), presents the methods under two main headings: *Data Collection* and *Data Analysis*. It uses a systematic numbering approach, clearly and concisely describing the steps in about 564 words.

Data Collection

"*Approval from the Institutional Review Board of the first researcher's institution (IRB No. 2–1,041,055-AB-N-01–2020-27) was first obtained, and consent to participate in the study was acquired from all participants. Data were collected via two rounds of interviews between May and July 2020.*" (**This part reports the ethical considerations and the timing and frequency of data collection.**)

"*1) The first-round semi-structured interviews were conducted online. Each interview lasted between 1 and 1.5 h and was audio recorded. Thirteen open-ended questions were prepared to guide the participants to effectively recollect their memories of the preparation and implementation of ERT and to share their experiences in chronological order (from early February to the end of June 2020). The participants were asked to describe how they first prepared and carried out their online course(s) and explain how they felt during the preparation and delivery of these courses. They were also asked to share the challenges they faced at different stages of ERT and the strategies they developed to address these challenges.*" (**This part describes the first round of interviews in detail, explaining the rationale behind the question design and the use of audio recording to ensure data richness and accuracy.**)

"*2) The second-round interviews were conducted via email or telephone to clarify the points made by the participants in the first-round interviews, share our initial understanding of their experiences, and obtain additional data on the changes in their teaching behaviours and feelings and the adjustments made to their ERT after the first interview.* (**This part elaborates on the second-round interviews, explaining the methods, purpose, and type of follow-up questions. It highlights how the second-round interviews reinforced the iterative nature of qualitative research that aims to build deeper insights through ongoing dialogue with participants.**)

Data Analysis

"*Interview data were analysed following the five phases below.*" (**The data analysis process was structured into five distinct phases, providing a clear and systematic framework for organizing and interpreting the data.**)

"*1) In the pre-processing phase, all audio-recorded interview files from the 12 participants were transcribed and exported to NVIVO 10 and Microsoft Excel 2016 to clean and organise the data. Responses that were unrelated to the study or without significant meaning were eliminated. Data from two participants (A and K in Table 1) who did not demonstrate evidence of being positive deviants in ERT were eliminated. In total, 50,651 words on 192 pages from the two rounds of interviews were used for the initial coding.*" (**This first step**

details the cleaning and organization of data, including the specific software used. The use of NVIVO is highlighted for its efficiency in managing qualitative data.)

"2) In the initial coding phase, the first author deconstructed the transcribed texts into a series of meaning units for analysis (i.e., sentences and paragraphs) and conducted inductive coding following the two steps of open coding and categorising (Creswell, 2007). To ensure trustworthiness during the data analysis, we conducted comparison and refinement within the interview data and codes several times (Marshall & Rossman, 2016)." **(This phase explains the approach to open coding and a reference used to support the methodology.)**

"3) We carefully read and re-read the responses under each theme and sub-theme in the elaboration phase me and elaborated on the initial coding results. After several rounds of discussions and revisions, we created tentative labels for the sub-themes under the initial themes to make sense of the data and more clearly depict the participants' positive deviance behaviours, factors affecting these behaviours, and the emotional changes they experienced during ERT." **(This part expands on how researchers fine-tune initial coding results by diving deeper into the data to create more specific sub-themes and ensure the robustness of the findings.)**

"4) In the validation phase, we invited an experienced colleague to take the role of a critical reviewer by reading the interview data and coding results and providing comprehensive feedback on our claims, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the research outcomes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)." **(This part explains the role of peer validation and its importance in reducing bias and increasing the overall credibility of the research.)**

"5) In the meaning-making phase, we examined the reviewer's comments, and once again reviewed and refined the coding results to make sense of the data more clearly and depict the participants' voices by applying the theoretical claims of the PDA. Ultimately, three phases of ERT were identified (Research Question 1), three themes emerged as positive deviance behaviours (Research Question 2), and two themes and four sub-themes were categorised as critical factors influencing these positive deviance behaviours (Research Question 3)." **(This part elaborates on how the final themes were distilled and connected to the research questions and theoretical claims, emphasizing the importance of a coherent narrative in qualitative analysis.)**

Notes on Researcher Positionality

In addition to the subheadings discussed so far, I strongly recommend including a section titled "Researcher Positionality" within the methodology. In qualitative research, addressing the researcher's positionality is crucial for enhancing the transparency, reflexivity, and credibility of the study (Holmes 2020). This section should explicitly outline how the researcher's personal background—such as their socio-cultural context, experiences, beliefs, and values—may have shaped the research design, data collection, and interpretation of findings. By offering this information, the researcher provides critical context for the study, which not only enriches the reader's understanding but also allows for greater scrutiny of potential biases.

Incorporating a discussion of positionality contributes significantly to ethical research practices, ensuring that power dynamics, particularly in interactions with participants, are addressed. Reflecting on one's positionality enables the researcher to critically examine and mitigate unconscious biases that might influence the research process. Furthermore, this reflexive approach enhances the credibility and validity

of the study by making the researcher's role more transparent, ensuring that findings are more trustworthy and genuinely reflective of participants' experiences.

When writing this section, aim for brevity (typically 100–200 words) while ensuring it provides enough detail to showcase how your positionality may have impacted the research process. This practice strengthens the ethical rigor of qualitative research and fosters a more equitable and honest engagement with the data.

Example of the Researcher Positionality Section

The researcher positionality example, adapted from Yin (2023), highlights the complexities of navigating dual roles during fieldwork with undergraduate Chinese international students.

> *"Conducting research with undergraduate Chinese international students required balancing my roles between a "xué zhǎng" and a researcher. "Xué zhǎng," which means a senior fellow student in Chinese, was the term used most frequently by the students to address me on various occasions. As an international student from China, I had the privilege of being treated as a member of their group and establishing a genuine rapport with them. The establishment of this interpersonal rapport was attributable to my commitment to involving myself in the everyday lives of the students, which included and went beyond the time we spent during interviews."* **(This part explains how the researcher's shared cultural background and experiences allowed them to build trust and rapport with participants, facilitating open communication during the research process.)**

> *"Despite my relationship with the students as a "xué zhǎng," I made a purposeful decision to maintain a researcher role throughout my fieldwork period. This researcher role can be explained from two main aspects. First, by assuming the role of a researcher, I made it explicit to the students that my relationship with them was consistently governed by ethical principles related to consent and confidentiality. Second, informed by my role as a researcher, I kept an eye on potential sources of researcher bias. To alleviate this concern, I made deliberate efforts in my data analysis and interpretation to prioritize the authentic voices of the students, instead of arguments based on my own assumptions."* **(This section elaborates on the strategies the researcher used to maintain objectivity and ensure the ethical integrity of the study. It demonstrates the researcher's self-awareness in balancing his/her insider status with the need for ethical rigor and methodological transparency.)**

Checklist: Key Strategies for Writing a Qualitative Methods Section

- Clearly describe the qualitative research approach (e.g., ethnography, case study) and briefly explain why it is suitable for your research goals.
- Provide a concise description of the research context or setting, highlighting relevant environmental, social, or institutional factors.
- Specify participant selection criteria and outline the recruitment process, including ethical considerations such as informed consent.

- Include key demographic details of participants (e.g., age, gender, education level) to provide context for the sample.
- Outline the data collection methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups) and tools used, with a brief explanation of when and how data were gathered.
- Summarize the data analysis process, detailing techniques like coding and thematic analysis, and note any strategies used to ensure validity and reliability, such as triangulation.
- Reflect on the researcher's positionality, discussing how it may have influenced the research process and interactions with participants.

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Chapter 14
Week 8: Writing the Document Analysis Methods Section

Abstract This chapter addresses the unique strategies needed for writing the methodology section of qualitative research that utilizes document analysis. It outlines how to effectively structure the section, ensuring transparency and reproducibility in studies based on the systematic examination of various document types, including prior research, institutional reports, and historical records. Key elements include selecting relevant documents, developing a review protocol, and coding and analyzing data. The focus is on ensuring that the methodology section is comprehensive and well-organized, covering the inclusion and exclusion criteria for document selection, the analysis framework, and techniques to ensure reliability and validity. These strategies are essential for ensuring the integrity of document analysis in qualitative research.

Keywords Analysis framework · Document analysis · Exclusion criteria · Inclusion criteria · Review protocol · Systematic review

Overview

Morgan (2022, p. 64) defines document analysis as a long-standing research method that involves examining different types of documents, including books, newspaper articles, academic papers, and institutional reports. For research papers employing document analysis, the methodology section generally comprises about 900 words or roughly 15% of a 6000-word paper. The section can be divided into three main subsections—Selecting Journals and Papers, Developing a Review Protocol or an Analysis Framework, and Data Coding and Analysis—with around 300 words allocated to each. These subsections can be expanded or adjusted based on your research's specific focus. The following sections provide a structured guide for organizing each subsection effectively.

Selecting Journals and Papers

In this subsection, it is crucial to clearly articulate the criteria and process for selecting the journals and papers included in the analysis. The choice of documents—whether journal articles, reports, or other types of papers—significantly influences the research outcomes, making this a foundational element of the methodology. A well-defined selection process enhances the credibility and replicability of the study, ensuring that only relevant, high-quality sources are included.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Precisely define the criteria for including or excluding documents in the analysis. For instance, you may opt to include only peer-reviewed articles published within a specific timeframe or focus on studies indexed in reputable databases like SSCI. Non-peer-reviewed materials, dissertations, or conference papers might be excluded to ensure the rigor of the analysis. Clearly documenting these criteria adds transparency to your methodology and allows other researchers to replicate your study or assess the selection process.

Example 1 is adapted from Martin et al. (2020).

"*We limited our search to peer-reviewed journals that focus on online learning and educational research. To ensure rigor, we selected 12 journals identified by expert consensus as publishing high-quality research in online learning. Dissertations and conference proceedings were excluded. Each study had to meet the screening criteria outlined in Table 1 to be included in the review.*" (**By thoroughly defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the authors set clear boundaries for the analysis and ensure that the documents selected are relevant and of high academic quality.**)

Example 2 is taken from June and Yoo (2014).

"*Five international journals—A, B, C, D, and E—were selected for this study. These journals, indexed in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), are published in English, have international readership, and focus on online education. We included original research articles by Asian authors, published between 2000 and 2013, excluding field notes and book reviews.*" (**This example shows a well-defined inclusion criterion, focusing on peer-reviewed, indexed journals and specific authorship, ensuring relevance and academic rigor. Excluding field notes and book reviews maintains focus on original research aligned with the study's objectives.**)

Search Strategy

When describing how relevant documents were located, it is essential to specify the databases used, the search terms applied, and the time period covered. These details ensure transparency and allow for the research process to be replicated. Let's examine an example from Martin et al. (2020).

"The Education Research Complete database was searched using the keywords below for published articles between the years 2009 and 2018 using both the Title and Keyword function for the following search terms: "online learning" OR "online teaching" OR "online program" OR "online course" OR "online education." **(This example demonstrates the use of a large academic database and specific search terms to ensure a comprehensive search. The defined time period narrows the search to focus specifically on studies conducted within the past decade, ensuring the inclusion of the current and relevant research.)**

Screening Process

You also need to detail the steps involved in screening and selecting documents for analysis. This process includes outlining the number of initial search results, how duplicates were removed, and the criteria used to assess the relevance of each document. Providing examples enhances clarity and illustrates how this process ensures that only the most pertinent documents are included in the analysis.

Example 1 is adapted from Martin et al. (2020).

"The article selection followed the flow shown in Figure 1. Initially, 3,000 articles were identified. After removing duplicates, 1,800 articles remained. Titles and abstracts were then reviewed, and 200 articles were selected for full-text review based on relevance." **(This example illustrates a clear filtering process, starting with duplicate removal and then refining the pool of articles through title and abstract screening, ensuring a focused review.)**

Example 2 is taken from Jung and Yoo (2014).

"Out of 4,332 articles published in the selected journals between 2000 and 2013, 1,137 (26.2%) were identified by their authorship as being from Asia. Co-authored papers were included if at least one author was from the region. After abstract reviews, 817 articles were excluded based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria, leaving 300 for final analysis." **(This example highlights a specific focus on the author's region to align with the research goals. The screening through abstract review ensures that only relevant studies are analyzed while maintaining a manageable dataset.)**

Developing a Review Protocol (or an Analysis Framework)

In this subsection, thoroughly explain the review protocol or analysis framework that will guide the document analysis. This includes the specific criteria for reviewing and analyzing the selected documents, ensuring a structured, transparent, and replicable process.

Review Protocol

The review protocol outlines the plan for analyzing the selected documents, closely aligned with the research questions or hypotheses. Its primary purpose is to ensure

that the document review is systematic and consistent across all data sources. Here is an example *from* Martin et al. (2020):

"*A review protocol was developed as a codebook in MAXQDA (analysis software) by three researchers. This protocol, structured as a codebook, was based on findings from prior review studies and an initial screening of the articles in this review. The codebook included 12 research themes listed earlier in Table 2 (Learner characteristics, Instructor characteristics, Course or program design and development, Course Facilitation, Engagement, Course Assessment, Course Technologies, Access, Culture, Equity, Inclusion, and Ethics, Leadership, Policy and Management, Instructor and Learner Support, and Learner Outcomes), four research settings (higher education, continuing education, K-12, corporate/military), and three research designs (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods). Figure 3 below is a screenshot of MAXQDA used for the coding process.*" (**This example highlights the systematic use of a codebook in software for organizing and analyzing documents, ensuring replicability and alignment with key research themes and designs. Note that typically, detailed protocol content is presented in tables or figures with a brief explanation in the main text.**)

Analysis Framework

Similar to the review protocol, the analysis framework specifies how the documents will be categorized and interpreted, using predefined themes or classifications to ensure systematic analysis. This helps maintain consistency throughout the data analysis process. Here is an example *from* Jung and Yoo (2014)*:*

"*To identify and classify the research topics of the selected papers, various classification tools from previous studies were reviewed. Hsu et al.'s (2013) 'cluster tree of major topics in Educational Technology' was determined to be the most suitable tool for this study's analysis. The 19 clusters in this tree were generated using text-mining and clustering techniques on nearly 3,000 articles published between 2000 and 2010 across six international journals. These clusters were validated by three experienced researchers. Table 2 provides descriptions of these 19 clusters, along with examples of the research topics covered.*" (**This example shows how a validated classification tool ensures that research topics are systematically categorized, enhancing the credibility and thoroughness of the analysis. It provides details in a table.**)

Pilot Testing

If a pilot test was conducted to refine the review protocol or analysis framework, it is essential to explain the process and results. A pilot test helps identify any ambiguities or inconsistencies, allowing researchers to make necessary adjustments before the main study. In cases where expert feedback or preliminary analysis was incorporated, this should also be documented to demonstrate the rigor of the review process. Let's examine an example *from* Jung and Yoo (2014)*:*

"*A pilot test was conducted to validate the review protocol. Based on the results, several categories were refined for clarity. Expert feedback was also incorporated to finalize the*

protocol. The final version of the protocol used in this study is presented in Table 4." **(This example shows how a pilot test helps refine the review protocol, ensuring clarity and accuracy. Incorporating expert feedback further enhances the validity of the protocol, making the study more robust.)**

Data Coding and Analysis

This section provides a detailed explanation of how the data were coded and analyzed. The coding process is a critical step in document analysis, allowing researchers to systematically extract relevant information and categorize it into themes for further interpretation.

Coding Process

This part outlines how the data were coded, the software used (if applicable), and methods for ensuring consistency, especially when multiple researchers are involved (e.g., inter-rater reliability checks). Coding typically involves assigning labels to meaningful segments of text and organizing them into predefined or emergent categories.

Example 1 is adapted from Martin et al. (2020).

"Research articles were coded by two researchers using MAXQDA. Initially, both researchers independently coded 10% of the articles, followed by a discussion to update and refine the coding framework. The second author, a doctoral student, then coded the remaining studies. The researchers met bi-weekly to address any coding-related questions. After the first phase of coding, more than 100 studies were categorized under Learner Characteristics or Engagement. As a result, a second phase of coding was conducted to further refine these themes. Learner Characteristics were divided into subthemes such as Academic, Affective, Motivational, Self-regulation, Cognitive, and Demographic Characteristics. Engagement was divided into subthemes such as Collaborating, Communication, Community, Involvement, Interaction, Participation, and Presence." **(This example highlights a collaborative coding process that ensures consistency and reliability, with regular meetings to address potential discrepancies and refine the framework.)**

Example 2 is adapted from Jung and Yoo (2014).

"The 1,137 articles from Asian sources were classified into a 19-element cluster by the paper's first author, who has 30 years of research experience in Educational Technology, and another scholar with 17 years of experience in the field. Initially, 230 articles, or about 20% of the total, were randomly selected for evaluation by both coders. With an initial agreement rate of 83%, the coders discussed their classifications until reaching a consensus. They then divided the task of classifying the remaining articles. Finally, the second author reviewed the number of articles in each category and made minor adjustments to the classification." **(This example demonstrates how the use of experienced coders and a consensus-building process strengthens the reliability of the coding procedure, ensuring that classifications are accurate and consistent.)**

Analysis Methods

Once coding is complete, various methods can be used to analyze the coded data, such as thematic analysis, content analysis, or frequency analysis. These methods help identify patterns, trends, and relationships within the data, enabling meaningful interpretations aligned with the research questions.

Example 1 is adapted from Martin et al. (2020).

"Frequency tables were generated for each variable to examine outliers and to group narrative data into categories. Once the data were cleaned and categorized, descriptive statistics were used to summarize each coded element. First, we present the frequency of publications related to online learning across 12 journals. The total number of articles for each journal (excluding editorials and book reviews) was manually counted from the journal websites. The trend of online learning research publications from 2009 to 2018 was also analyzed. Finally, descriptive information about the 12 themes, including the subthemes of Learner Characteristics and Engagement, was provided, with further elaboration based on research settings and methodologies." **(This example illustrates how frequency analysis and descriptive statistics help organize coded data, providing insights into research trends over time and across different journals.)**

Example 2 is adapted from Jung and Yoo (2014).

"The content analysis method was used to analyze the papers. The main research topic of each paper was first identified through the abstract and then confirmed by the paper's title and keywords. If the main topic could not be determined this way, the entire text was reviewed. If a paper could be classified into more than one cluster, further analysis was conducted to determine its most significant dimension." **(This example shows how content analysis allows for the systematic identification of research topics, ensuring that each paper is accurately categorized based on its primary focus.)**

Conclusion

Writing the methodology section for a research paper based on document analysis requires carefully documenting each step in selecting, classifying, and analyzing the documents. In my experience, this process can often feel long and tedious. However, if you know how to leverage various tools—such as those for keyword search and frequency analysis (e.g., AntConc, Sketch Engine, WordSmith Tools), text analysis and visualization (e.g., Voyant Tools, Lexos), and keyword data visualization (e.g., Tableau, Gephi, Google Trends)—along with widely used platforms like NVivo and MAXQDA, you will find document analysis research far more engaging and manageable than you might expect. This section must be comprehensive, transparent, and replicable to ensure that the research process is rigorous and that the findings are reliable and valid. A well-documented methodology enhances the credibility of the research and allows other researchers to replicate or build on the study. The strategies discussed in this chapter are particularly effective when analyzing a variety of documents such as journal articles, government reports, policy documents, or historical records, ensuring a systematic approach that contributes to the overall robustness of the research.

Checklist: Key Strategies for Writing the Document Analysis Methods Section

- Clearly specify the types of documents analyzed (e.g., reports, articles, legal texts) and justify their relevance to your research questions.
- Detail the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to ensure the quality and relevance of the documents, explaining the rationale behind document selection.
- Outline the search process, including the databases, search terms, and timeframe used, as well as the steps taken to remove duplicates and confirm document relevance.
- Describe how documents were coded, specifying the software used (e.g., NVivo, MAXQDA), and explain the process of developing themes or categories for analysis.
- If multiple researchers were involved, explain how consistency was maintained, such as through inter-rater reliability or standardized frameworks.
- Summarize the analysis methods, such as thematic or content analysis, used to interpret the data and how these methods align with the research objectives.
- Use appropriate tools to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the analysis process, making document analysis more manageable and enjoyable.

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Chapter 15
Week 9: Presenting Research Results

Abstract After writing the Methods section, the next crucial step is to present the research results or findings clearly and comprehensively. This chapter provides strategies to effectively communicate these results, ensuring they are directly linked to your research questions, objectives, or hypotheses. Whether quantitative or qualitative, results must be presented in a structured manner, using visual aids like tables, graphs, and diagrams where appropriate. We will explore different approaches, including organizing results around research questions or integrating data collection methods, to ensure clarity and precision. Ultimately, this chapter will guide you in crafting a results section that highlights key findings and prepares readers for the discussion.

The Importance of Research Results in a Scholarly Article

The results section is a critical component of a research paper, as it serves as the culmination of the entire research process. It is in this section that the data collected through experiments, surveys, interviews, or other methods are systematically presented and analyzed to answer the research questions or test the hypotheses. This results section plays a critical role in demonstrating the integrity of the research, as it provides the empirical evidence that supports or challenges the study's assumptions. A well-constructed results section achieves several important objectives:

- **Clearly Presents Data**: It provides a detailed, objective presentation of the findings, enabling readers to follow the research process and understand the outcomes.
- **Directly Addresses Research Questions**: The data is linked directly to the research questions or hypotheses, ensuring that the results address the core objectives of the study.

- **Demonstrates the Study's Contribution**: The findings highlight how the research adds to existing knowledge, potentially influencing further studies, policies, or real-world applications.
- **Ensures Transparency**: By presenting the data and methods of analysis clearly, the results section allows readers to assess the validity and reliability of the research, supporting its credibility.
- **Facilitates Replicability**: A well-documented results section makes it possible for other researchers to replicate the study, which is fundamental to scientific progress.
- **Bridges the Research Process**: The results connect the initial research questions with the conclusions, serving as the foundation for the final analysis and discussion.

For me, the results section is more than just a presentation of data; it serves as the backbone of the paper's argument, tying the entire research process together. I aim to write it with clarity, precision, and thoroughness to ensure that the findings are not only accessible and interpretable but also valuable to the academic community. Now, let's explore how to effectively structure the results section.

Structuring the Results Section

While both quantitative and qualitative studies need to provide comprehensive yet concise main findings to answer the research questions and avoid distractions (Korstjens and Moser 2017), the organization of the results section depends on your research's nature along with the journal's specific guidelines. In any type of research, a common approach is to structure the findings in a way that addresses the research questions, often integrating both the data collection methods and other elements like theoretical framing or hypothesis testing.

Considering Three Approaches

When you are structuring the Results section in your quantitative study or the Findings section of your qualitative research, consider the following approaches that are widely used in journal articles.

(1) **Approach 1—Follow the Research Questions**: When structuring the results or findings section, organizing it according to the research questions, hypotheses, or objectives is key. Structuring results or findings around research questions ensures that you provide answers to the questions initially posed, strengthening the link between the purpose of the research and the data presented. It keeps the narrative of your results section focused and easy to understand (Booth et al. 2008). For example, if your study has three research questions, the section should

be divided into three subsections. This helps maintain a logical flow, making it easier for readers to follow the results and understand their relevance to the research objectives. For this reason, I personally prefer to apply this approach.

(2) **Approach 2—Integrate with Data Collection Methods**: Another approach is to organize findings based on the structure of the data collection methods, especially if your study involves multiple phases or types of data. For example, qualitative studies might present findings based on themes that emerged from interviews, while quantitative studies might present data through statistical tests. In mixed-methods research, for instance, results can be best presented in two parts: quantitative findings followed by qualitative findings, reflecting the order of data collection and analysis. This approach allows each method's results to be clearly understood before integrating them, typically in the Discussion section. However, I generally do not advise researchers to structure the results section based solely on data analysis methods (e.g., "Survey Analysis Results" or "Interview Analysis Results") as this method-based approach can fragment the results, making it harder for readers to grasp the overall picture and its connection to the research objectives. Of course, exceptions can be made depending on the nature of the research.

(3) **Approach 3—Combine Both**: Another strategy is to combine both approaches. In some cases, it may be best to combine both approaches. Start by presenting results in response to research questions but integrate explanations of the methods where necessary to clarify how specific data were obtained or analyzed. Korstjens and Moser (2017) argue that the Findings section in qualitative research consists mostly of synthesis and interpretations with links to empirical data. You may need to present interpretations, themes, or an emerging model alongside answers to the initial research questions. In quantitative research, where qualitative data are collected, you can apply this combined approach.

Revisiting the Research Questions

Which approach you have decided to use, I want you to first revisit your research questions. Let's say you had three research questions listed at the end of the Introduction section:

- **Research Question (RQ) 1**: What is the impact of social media usage on academic performance?
- **Research Question (RQ) 2**: What is the impact of social media usage on students' time management skills?
- **Research Question (RQ) 3**: Do students' personal characteristics mediate the impact of social media usage on academic performance and time management skills?

Structuring the Results Section

If you are following **Approach 1**, the results section of your paper will be structured into three subsections, each addressing a specific research question:

- **RQ1**: Impact of social media usage on academic performance
- **RQ2**: Impact of social media usage on time management skills
- **RQ3**: Personal characteristics as mediating variables

However, if you also needed to report emerging themes from open-ended questions in a quantitative study and decided to use **Approach 3**, your results section could include an additional subsection, such as:

- **Findings from open-ended questions**

Alternatively, you could highlight specific emerging themes from these open-ended responses, for example:

- **Changes in emotional intelligence during social media use**
- **Changes in social intelligence during social media use**

By incorporating these emerging themes, you create a more comprehensive results section that combines both quantitative and qualitative findings, providing a richer understanding of the data.

Writing the Results Section

Before writing the results or findings section, I typically start with the review of related research papers to ensure a higher quality and more effective section.

Reviewing related papers that use similar statistical methods offers valuable insights into how other researchers in your field report statistical values, structure their results, and present their findings. This can guide you in effectively organizing and presenting your own results. By analyzing how others have handled similar data, you can gain a clearer understanding of the best practices for presenting your own results. Pay particular attention to how statistical significance, effect sizes, and confidence intervals are reported, as well as how they use and structure tables, graphs, and charts. I find this preparatory step ensures that my results section aligns with established conventions in my discipline, making the research easier to follow and more credible to the audience.

Strategies to Write the Results for Quantitative Research

When presenting quantitative data, consider the following strategies:

(1) **Start with the Main Point**: Open each paragraph by providing a direct answer to the corresponding research question. This should be a clear, concise statement of the key findings. Follow it with supporting details, such as data or examples, to give a fuller picture of the result.

(2) **Ensure Clarity and Accuracy**: Present quantitative data and analysis results clearly, using precise language to make the findings easy for readers to understand. Double-check for accuracy to ensure that no mistakes or misinterpretations occur in reporting the data.

(3) **Use Visual Aids**: Incorporate tables, graphs, and charts to present data effectively. These visual aids should simplify information, making it easier for the reader to grasp key patterns and results at a glance.

(4) **Provide Concise Titles for Visuals**: Each table, graph, or chart should have a brief, descriptive title that encapsulates its content and significance, giving readers an immediate understanding of what the visual represents.

(5) **Explain Visual Tools in the Text**: Reference and describe each visual tool in the accompanying text, explaining what it displays and why it matters to the research question. This ensures that readers can understand the relevance of the visual data in the context of your findings.

(6) **Highlight Statistical Significance**: Clearly emphasize statistically significant results, and include important statistical values like p-values, confidence intervals, or effect sizes. These details support your claims and give your results credibility.

(7) **Maintain Consistency**: Ensure consistent use of terminology, symbols, and measurement units throughout the results section to avoid confusing the reader. Uniformity ensures that the data is easy to follow and interpret.

Strategies to Write the Findings for Qualitative Research

When presenting qualitative data, consider these strategies:

(1) **Emphasize Themes and Patterns**: Focus on the main themes and patterns that emerged from the data analysis, providing a rich and detailed account of the findings.

(2) **Incorporate Participant Quotes**: Use direct quotes from participants to illustrate key points and add depth to the results. Ensure the quotes are relevant and support the conclusions drawn.

(3) **Provide Context**: Give sufficient context when presenting qualitative data so that readers can fully grasp the significance of the findings in relation to the research questions.

(4) **Utilize Visual Tools for Themes**: Use thematic maps, diagrams, or other visual aids to explain the relationships between different themes and to help the reader understand the structure of the findings.

Concluding the Results/Findings Section

In most cases, a separate conclusion is not required for the Results section of a quantitative paper or the Findings section of a qualitative paper. However, in qualitative research, you can enhance the conclusion with visual tools like diagrams or thematic maps to summarize key themes, variables, or factors and highlight their relationships. This approach, as demonstrated by Choi et al. (2023), provides a clear visual representation of the findings, making complex relationships easier to understand.

Alternatively, you can conclude the section with a clear and concise written summary of the most significant findings. This helps reinforce the primary outcomes and prepares the reader for the subsequent discussion. For example, a concluding paragraph could be structured like this:

> *"In summary, the results indicate that higher social media usage is associated with lower academic performance and poorer time management skills among students. These findings directly address our research questions, showing the potential negative impacts of excessive social media usage. The following discussion will explore these implications further and suggest strategies to mitigate these effects."*

If needed, by using either visual tools or a concise summary, you can effectively close the Results or Findings section, highlighting the key insights and setting the stage for further analysis in the discussion.

Checklist: Effective Tips for Writing the Results or Findings Section

- Review related papers to see how statistical data is presented and to understand relevant writing conventions before drafting your Results/Findings section.
- Organize the section with subsections for each research question, adding extra subsections only when needed.
- Use visual aids like tables and graphs with clear titles to simplify complex data.
- Maintain consistent terminology and measurement units throughout the section.
- In qualitative research, emphasize themes and patterns that emerge, using participant quotes to illustrate key points as necessary.
- Provide sufficient context for readers to grasp the importance of qualitative findings.
- Conclude with a concise summary or visual tools to highlight key findings, if appropriate.

References

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Chapter 16
Week 10: Crafting the Discussion Section

Abstract In the Discussion section, you interpret the significance of the research results presented in Chap. 15. This is where you analyze your findings, situate them within the theoretical framework, and relate them to existing literature. The Discussion is a critical part of your paper, showcasing your ability to think analytically and creatively while demonstrating a deep understanding of your research topic. For many researchers, including myself, this is the most engaging and exciting section to write, as it allows for the exploration of the broader implications and connections beyond the raw data. In this chapter, I will guide you on how to effectively structure the Discussion, offering practical strategies for writing each component with clarity and depth, drawing on both my experience and relevant references.

Determining the Optimal Length for the Discussion Section

For a 6000-word paper, it is generally recommended that the Discussion section make up around 20% of the total word count, which equates to approximately 1200 words. This length is typically comparable to other major sections of the paper, such as the Introduction and Results sections, both of which may also incorporate a review of the literature to contextualize the study.

However, the suggested word count for each section serves as a guideline rather than a strict rule. The actual length of your Discussion section should be tailored to the scope and complexity of your research findings, the depth of analysis required, and the nuances of your argument. For example, if your findings are particularly novel or complex, or if your research opens new avenues for future inquiry, you may require more space to thoroughly explain and interpret the results. Conversely, if your findings are more straightforward or limited in scope, a shorter Discussion section may be sufficient.

Ultimately, the key is to ensure that the Discussion provides a thorough interpretation of the results, addresses the research questions or hypotheses, and considers the implications of your findings within the broader context of existing literature, all while maintaining a logical and concise narrative.

How to Structure and Write the Discussion

The Discussion section typically does not require subheadings, though using them can be helpful for emphasizing key points. Personally, I find it useful to start with subheadings to organize my thoughts. Once the section is fully written, I remove them if they are not necessary. This approach has proven effective for me. Whether or not you use subheadings, the following elements should always be included:

Restatement of the Research Objectives

Begin the Discussion by briefly restating the research objectives. Summarize the research objectives in 1–2 sentences, approximately 30 words. This reminds the readers of the study's focus and sets the context for interpreting the results. Here are examples of concise research objective statements:

Example 1 is adapted from Choi et al. (2023).

"This study aimed to identify the positive deviance behaviors of faculty members who performed successfully in emergency remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and the key factors influencing those behaviors."

Example 2 is arbitrarily generated to illustrate how to write a concise research objective.

"The main objective of this study was to examine the impact of social media influencer endorsements on children's behavior in a classroom setting."

Example 3 is arbitrarily generated to demonstrate how to write a concise research objective.

"*The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of differentiated instruction on student motivation and academic achievement across multiple countries."*

Discussion of Key Findings

Report and interpret the most important findings related to the research questions or hypotheses. This can be done in a single paragraph or across several, with a word count ranging from 200 to 500 words or more, depending on the complexity of the

results. In this part, and throughout the Discussion section, you should go beyond merely describing or reporting the findings. You must develop claims rooted in your results, established theories, and existing models within your discipline. For guidance on different types of claims, refer to Belcher (2019, Week 6).

You can begin with summarizing the key findings that directly address the research objectives, and interpret them in relation to the research questions or hypotheses. Then discuss how these findings answer the core questions, emphasizing their significance. You may also compare your results with those of previous studies to highlight any similarities or differences. Begin by stating the main findings, and then deepen your interpretation by linking it to relevant literature, as demonstrated in the examples below.

Example 1 is adapted from Choi et al. (2023**).**

"*The results revealed that philosophy-driven decision-making, informed planning, and ongoing performance monitoring were three specific positive deviance behaviors of successful faculty members in emergency remote teaching.*" (**The key findings are summarized in one sentence, concisely addressing the research objective, which was to investigate the successful behaviors of faculty during online teaching in the COVID-19 era. The findings identify three core behaviors that answered this question.)**

"*This finding is contrary to previous studies (e.g., AA, BB, CC) conducted with ordinary faculty members, in which faculty attitudes and perceptions of technology were necessary for the successful adoption and implementation of online education.*"(**Here, the difference between the current study's findings and previous research is highlighted, showing a departure from established assumptions about technology's role in teaching success.)**

"*However, for the faculty members in our study who were positive deviants, their teaching philosophy and pedagogical decisions based on this philosophy played a more important role than their perceptions of online technology's usefulness or ease of use in decision-making, planning, and implementation of online education.*" (**This analysis explains why the findings differ from previous research by pointing out the greater importance of a well-established teaching philosophy in guiding faculty decisions and actions.)**

"*This finding suggests that future faculty development and capacity building must help faculty members develop technological competencies, clarify, and elaborate their teaching philosophy, and make pedagogical decisions based on this philosophy.*" (**The significance of the findings is discussed, suggesting practical applications for future faculty development programs, which should go beyond technical skills and focus on philosophical clarity in teaching.)**

Example 2 is arbitrarily generated to serve as a sample for writing the discussion of key points.

"*Our findings indicate that endorsements by social media influencers significantly increase children's classroom behaviors.*" (**The key finding is summarized, showing the clear impact of influencer endorsements on children's behavior in school settings.)**

"*This suggests that influencers play a crucial role in shaping children's behavior in school settings by impacting their attitudes, choices, and interactions, as argued by previous studies (e.g., A, B, C). Whether these influencers are peers, teachers, or figures from popular media, their influence can significantly affect how children navigate social and academic environments, contributing to the development of both positive and negative behaviors.*" (**The significance of the finding is discussed, recognizing the strong influence of social media figures. To deepen the discussion, additional sentences are added to explore how this finding relates to existing research.)**

Example 3 is arbitrarily generated to provide a sample of how to write the discussion for key points.

"*Our findings indicate that differentiated instruction significantly improves both learning motivation and academic achievement. By tailoring teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students, differentiated instruction fosters a more inclusive and engaging learning environment.*" (**The key finding is summarized, showing that adapting instruction to meet diverse student needs leads to improved outcomes.**)

"*This suggests that tailoring instructional strategies to meet diverse student needs can lead to more effective learning outcomes by addressing individual learning styles, strengths, and challenges.*" (**The significance of the finding is discussed, emphasizing how differentiated instruction is a powerful tool for enhancing learning. A deeper discussion should follow, linking this result to the broader literature on differentiated instruction, its impact across different learning environments, and long-term academic outcomes.**)

Discussion of Results Consistent with Previous Research

Discuss these findings briefly, especially if they align with previous studies highlighted in the introduction. There is no need to repeat detailed explanations; instead, emphasize their consistency with past research.

Example 1 is arbitrarily generated to illustrate how to write a discussion of results that align with previous studies.

"*Our study also found that influencer endorsements positively affect children's attitudes toward learning and classroom activities. This result is consistent with previous research (e.g., A, B, C—cite the related studies mentioned in the introduction), which demonstrated that influencer endorsements have a significant impact on children's attitudes toward school life.*" (**When your findings match those of previous research, a brief acknowledgment like this is sufficient to show alignment. There is no need to restate the entire background, just highlight that the results are consistent with earlier studies.**)

Example 2 is arbitrarily generated to demonstrate how to write a discussion of results that are consistent with previous studies.

"*Consistent with previous studies conducted in other cultural contexts, such as A (2020), B (2021), and C (2012), the findings of this study reveal that Korean college students similarly experienced feelings of anxiety and frustration in open and flexible learning environments, particularly during the initial stages of online learning.*" (**This sentence points out the consistency between the current study's results and past research. It emphasizes that similar findings have been observed in different cultural settings, suggesting a broader trend.**)

"*As they gained more experience, however, students began to recognize the benefits of open and flexible online learning opportunities, as suggested by previous studies (E, 2007; F, 2015; G, 2004—these studies were not mentioned in the Introduction section), and became more adaptable to both learning and interacting in an online environment.*" (**Here, the findings build on the initial alignment with previous research by showing an evolution in student attitudes. Although these additional studies were not cited in the introduction, mentioning them here highlights how the findings progress and mirror trends found in the broader literature. This also provides depth to your interpretation.**)

Highlight of New and Interesting Findings

Highlight and discuss particularly interesting results, new discoveries, or findings that either align with or differ from previous studies. This is often the most engaging part for both authors and readers. The length of this section will vary depending on the number of points you wish to explore, with around 200 words typically dedicated to each point, covering 3–5 key findings.

Explore these types of findings in detail, incorporating new literature to support your interpretations. I strive to engage thoughtfully in why these differences or new insights have emerged, bringing in creative and in-depth discussion.

Example 1 is arbitrarily generated to serve as a sample for highlighting new and interesting findings.

"Our results differ from previous research, such as A (2017) and B (2018), who found no significant difference between the K training method and the L training method. This discrepancy may be due to differences in study populations and the specific training protocols used." (**The differing results are introduced, and a plausible explanation is offered. To strengthen the discussion, subsequent sentences should discuss the variations between populations or methods, supported by additional studies not cited in the Introduction section. Bringing in fresh literature here provides a more nuanced understanding and adds credibility to the explanation.**)

Example 2 is adapted from Aoki et al. (2022).

"Interestingly, Japanese students reported that the absence of background noise in online classes was bothersome. Classes that were too quiet hindered their motivation and engagement, with students expressing a preference for hearing some ambient noise from their peers during lectures." (**This introduces a novel finding that deviates from typical concerns in online learning.**)

"In fact, several studies have explored the effect of ambient noise in different settings. For instance, Mehta et al. (2012) found that moderate background noise levels (around 70 dB) enhanced creative performance in office environments by disrupting typical thought patterns. Similarly, Dzhambov et al. (2021) examined the acoustic environments of online learners and found that natural sounds, including human voices, improved learners' self-rated health by creating a more restorative environment compared to mechanical sounds." (**These studies are cited to connect the new finding to existing literature, broadening the scope of interpretation and adding depth to the discussion.**)

"Further research is needed to determine the optimal soundscapes for online learning environments, both at home and in other settings." (**The recommendation for further research emphasizes the need to solidify this new finding and explore its implications across various learning environments.**)

Example 3 is arbitrarily created to serve as a sample for highlighting new and noteworthy findings.

"An unexpected finding was the significantly greater improvement in social networking among female participants compared to males in a discussion group." (**This summarizes an unexpected result that deviates from established research.**)

"This contrasts with earlier studies, which found no gender differences. The observed disparity could be attributed to differences in personality traits on human interactions, as suggested by F, G, and H." (**The difference from previous research is acknowledged,**

and new literature is cited to offer potential explanations, enriching the discussion with deeper insights. The subsequent sentences should further explore these differences in relation to relevant studies.)

Discussion of Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In the final part of the discussion, use 1–2 paragraphs, around 200 words, to address the limitations of your study and suggest future research directions. In some papers, this may be incorporated into the Conclusion section.

It is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations and explain how they may influence the interpretation of your findings. Additionally, suggest ways these limitations could be addressed in future studies. By discussing both the limitations and potential future research, you demonstrate an understanding of your research's broader context and your commitment to advancing the field. Below are three examples that show different approaches to structuring this discussion with varying levels of detail.

Example 1 is adapted from Choi et al. (2023).

"*The data for this study were collected from interviews conducted one month after the start of ERT, between May 2020 and July 2020; therefore, the results may not fully capture what faculty members did during the early or later stages of the crisis.*" **(The first limitation is identified, noting that the data only reflect a specific point in time.)**

"*This suggests the need for prospective studies that apply different data collection methods throughout the entire crisis period.*" **(A direction for future research is proposed, recommending longitudinal studies or continuous data collection over time to better capture faculty behaviors across different phases of the crisis, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of their adaptation.)**

"*Another limitation of the research is that the findings from a qualitative study, which included ten faculty members who performed well during ERT at a few universities in Korea, may not fully apply to other contexts.*" **(The second limitation is identified, highlighting the small, culturally specific sample size, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations or different educational settings.)**

"*Future studies involving more faculty members from diverse cultural contexts and considering variables such as faculty members' subject areas and teaching methods are highly recommended.*" **(A direction for future research is proposed, suggesting larger, more diverse samples to explore whether these findings hold true across different countries, academic disciplines, and teaching practices, enhancing the generalizability of the research.)**

"*In particular, future studies could examine faculty members' experiences across a wide range of disciplines, including the arts and natural sciences, where non-traditional teaching methods such as creative production and laboratory activities are extensively applied.*" **(This provides a more detailed suggestion for future research by identifying specific academic fields, such as the arts and sciences, where teaching methods differ significantly from traditional approaches, and exploring how faculty in these fields adapt to remote teaching.)**

"*Although the criteria for selecting successful faculty members in this study were useful, there is still a need to develop more detailed standards to identify positive deviants for future*

studies. Finally, given the interactive nature of online education, future research should seek student feedback on their instructors' successful behaviors to better understand faculty members' positive deviance behaviors." **(Two additional limitations are presented, and suggestions for further research are offered.)**

Example 2 is adapted from Jung et al. (2021).

"*One limitation of this study is that the results obtained from the autoethnography of the five researchers who taught relatively smaller classes at a liberal arts college in Japan may not always be transferable to other contexts.*" **(The first limitation is identified, acknowledging that the small number of study participants limits the generalizability of the findings to other teaching environments, particularly those with larger class sizes or different cultural or institutional settings.)**

"Future research engaging more participants who teach online classes of different sizes and in various teaching situations for periods longer than a 10-week academic term is recommended." **(A direction for future research is suggested, proposing that larger, more varied participants across different teaching environments and timeframes would help determine whether the findings hold in broader contexts.)**

"Although the reflective practice cycle is proposed based on the findings from our autoethnographic data, its phases and components may require further evaluation and validation in diverse contexts and with quantitative data." **(The second limitation and future research direction are discussed, highlighting that the reflective practice model derived from qualitative autoethnographic data may not be fully applicable across different contexts or measurable without quantitative methods. This suggests the need for additional studies to refine and validate the model in other teaching and learning environments.)**

Example 3 is arbitrarily generated to illustrate how to discuss limitations and directions for future research.

"A key limitation of this study is its use of cross-sectional data, which captures information at only one point in time, limiting our ability to evaluate the long-term impacts of educational policies." **(The first limitation is identified, emphasizing that cross-sectional data provide a limited view and do not allow for an analysis of how educational policies evolve or sustain their effects over time.)**

"Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to monitor policy outcomes over time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of policy sustainability and its evolution within the education sector." **(A direction for future research is proposed, suggesting that longitudinal studies.)**

"Another limitation is the study's focus on a single region, Europe, which may not reflect the diversity of educational policy environments in other regions." **(The second limitation is identified, noting that the geographical scope of the study is too narrow to account for the diverse educational systems and policies that exist worldwide, thereby limiting the global applicability of the findings.)**

"To enhance the generalizability of the findings and gain deeper insights into the factors contributing to policy success in education, future studies should include multiple regions and explore diverse educational policy contexts across various settings." **(A direction for future research is proposed, recommending that studies include a broader geographical scope, examining educational policies in various regions and contexts.)**

By applying the above strategies, your Discussion section will clearly communicate the importance and impact of your research while engaging with existing scholarship and practical applications.

Checklist: Key Strategies for Writing an Effective Discussion:

- Begin with a restatement of the research objectives and a summary of key findings, ensuring a clear connection to the research questions or hypotheses.
- Highlight findings that align with previous studies, briefly acknowledging their consistency without going into excessive detail.
- Discuss unexpected or novel findings with creativity, providing fresh perspectives and additional context where necessary.
- Develop claims based on your results, established theories, and models, while offering deeper interpretations supported by relevant literature.
- Keep the Discussion focused, avoiding repetition or unnecessary detail, and ensuring each point logically builds on the previous one.
- Acknowledge study limitations and suggest future research directions to address these limitations and build upon your findings.

References

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Chapter 17
Week 11: Concluding Your Research

Abstract   This chapter focuses on crafting an effective Conclusion for your research paper, which encapsulates the key outcomes and contributions of your study. The Conclusion, typically around 300 words, is a crucial final section that answers the "so what?" question by demonstrating the relevance and significance of your work. Whether it is structured in one or several paragraphs, the Conclusion should highlight the main contributions and provide a concise summary of key findings if they were not already covered in the Discussion. While I recommend addressing limitations and future research directions in the Discussion section rather than the Conclusion, they can be included in the Conclusion depending on the nature of your paper. This chapter also outlines strategies for summarizing key points effectively, emphasizing your study's theoretical, methodological, and/or practical contributions. Finally, the chapter offers approaches to conclude with a thought-provoking statement that motivates further inquiry or suggests future directions in the field.

Keywords   Academic contributions · Conclusion · Key findings · Practical contributions · Research summary · Theoretical contributions

Summarizing Key Points

If you did not summarize the key points or findings in the Discussion section, the following strategies can help you effectively condense the core aspects of your research into one concise paragraph in the Conclusion:

Strategies for Writing the Summary Part

(1) **Keep the Summary Concise**: Begin the Conclusion by briefly summarizing the key points of your research. This summary should focus on the most important findings and their relevance, without adding unnecessary details. Avoid

repeating entire phrases or sentences from earlier sections of your paper, especially from the Discussion. Instead, present the information in a fresh, clear way that helps the reader quickly grasp the essence of your research. I recommend using ChatGPT to help generate ideas for this summary section.

(2) **Emphasize the Core Message**: Rather than attempting to summarize all of your findings, concentrate on the main message you want your audience to take away. Focus on the findings that best reflect the impact of your study. By narrowing down to the most significant results, you ensure the conclusion leaves a lasting impression on the reader.

(3) **Avoid Repeating the Same Phrases**: If the key points and findings have already been discussed in the Discussion section, it may be unnecessary to repeat them in the Conclusion. In such cases, you can omit a summary altogether. However, if you feel it is necessary to revisit your findings, make sure to rephrase the key points concisely and differently from how they were presented in the previous section. This approach helps reinforce the essential message without sounding repetitive, and it ensures that the Conclusion adds value rather than merely repeating earlier content.

Examples of the Summarizing Part

Example 1, taken from Yassin and Jung (2021), offers a narrative-style conclusion that effectively summarizes three main findings while also providing insights into key aspects of the research. The use of a narrative approach allows for a flowing and coherent synthesis of the results. Each finding is presented clearly, with the final sentence tying together all the major conclusions and reinforcing the overall significance of the research.

"STEM teachers were found to be integrating PDF references, videos, educational websites, and online quizzes as OER throughout the STEM teaching and learning process." (**This sentence summarizes the first key finding, providing a concise overview of how STEM teachers utilized a variety of OER in their teaching practices.**)

"The study identified three pedagogical purposes of OER use in the context of STEM education in a less advanced country: 1) maintaining motivation, 2) seeking information, and 3) developing student competencies." (**Here, the second key finding is summarized, focusing on the specific reasons behind the use of OER, which reflects the pedagogical goals in a less developed educational environment.**)

"Teachers reported using certain OER more frequently depending on pedagogical purposes. Videos were the most commonly utilized OER to maintain student motivation. PDF references were the most frequently used OER to provide information and course content. Reading materials were the most commonly used OER to develop student competencies." (**This sentence offers more detailed insights by breaking down the usage of different types of OER based on their specific pedagogical functions.**)

"The findings also showed that integrating OER in STEM education promotes student engagement and provides students with opportunities to broaden their perspectives and explore new ideas." (**This summarizes the third key finding.**)

"Therefore, a strong case can be made that OER positively influences motivation, content delivery, and the development of 21st-century competencies for STEM students in Egypt and other developing nations." **(The concluding sentence pulls all the findings together, reinforcing the overall argument of the study. This synthesis not only summarizes the key points but also ties them to a larger, more impactful conclusion.)**

Example 2, adapted from Yassin and Jung (2021), presents a bullet-point format for summarizing key findings in the Conclusion. This approach is particularly effective when the key points have already been discussed narratively in the Discussion section. The bullet-point format condenses the findings, making them easier to digest for the reader, while still providing clarity on the research's main contributions.

"Our study has yielded several significant findings:

- *Finding One: STEM teachers integrated PDFs, videos, educational websites, and online quizzes as OER throughout the STEM teaching and learning process, using different types of OER for various pedagogical purposes.*
- *Finding Two: OER in STEM education served three purposes: (1) maintaining motivation, mostly with videos, (2) providing information, commonly with PDFs, and (3) developing student competencies, frequently with reading materials.*
- *Finding Three: The integration of OER in STEM education enhanced student engagement and broadened their perspectives."*

(The bullet-point format allows for a clearer, more organized presentation while still conveying the same depth of meaning.)

"Therefore, a strong argument can be made that OER positively influences motivation, content delivery, and 21st-century competencies for STEM students in Egypt and other developing nations." **(This concluding sentence echoes the closing of Example 1 but in a more concise manner, reinforcing the significance of the findings and drawing the discussion to a close.)**

Highlighting Contribution to the Field

To effectively demonstrate how your research contributes to the field, it is essential to place your findings within a broader academic and practical context. This involves clearly connecting your research to existing knowledge, showcasing how your work builds upon, challenges, or refines current theories and practices, and highlighting the advancements your findings bring to the discipline. Consider the following approaches when discussing your research's contributions:

Strategies for Writing the Contributions

(1) **Emphasize Theoretical Contributions**: One of the primary ways your research can contribute to the field is by testing, refining, or expanding existing theories or models. When emphasizing theoretical contributions, explain how your research provides a more in-depth understanding of the topic. Perhaps your study fills

a gap in existing literature, introduces new variables, or challenges previously accepted assumptions. By addressing these theoretical gaps, your work not only enriches the academic discourse but also strengthens or reshapes the theoretical framework within which future research can operate. The key is to demonstrate how your findings provide new insights or confirm emerging trends in the field.

(2) **Highlight Methodological Contributions**: Methodological innovation is another significant way your research can contribute to the field. If your study uses novel approaches or techniques that differ from those traditionally employed in the field, make sure to emphasize this aspect. Whether it is the introduction of new data collection methods, innovative analytical tools, or an unconventional research design, methodological contributions can set your work apart by providing other researchers with new tools or frameworks they can use in their studies. Highlight how your methods offer a new lens for exploring familiar topics, and how they might be applied or adapted in future research.

(3) **Discuss Practical Contributions**: Beyond theoretical and methodological innovations, your research can also contribute to the field by offering practical solutions or implications that extend beyond academia. Practical contributions demonstrate how your findings can influence real-world applications, such as policy changes, educational reforms, technological advancements, or behavior modifications. Highlight how your work offers actionable insights or provides evidence-based recommendations that can improve policies and practices in specific areas, whether it be within education, healthcare, business, or other sectors. The practical contributions often bridge the gap between theory and practice, showing the relevance of academic research to solving real-world problems.

Examples of Highlighting Contribution Part

Example 1, adapted from Lee and Jung (2021), provides a detailed discussion of both the theoretical and practical contributions of the research over the course of two paragraphs.

> *"The present study yields several theoretical and practical implications."* (**This sentence serves as an introduction, clearly signaling to the reader that the upcoming discussion will address both the theoretical and practical contributions of the research. It provides a roadmap for what follows.**)

> *"Theoretically, planned voluntary change and urgent inevitable change may be radically different, suggesting that studies on these two topics should have different research agendas. While the former may be concerned with factors that induce change, the latter should focus more on the quality, or depth of change and related influencing factors. The current lack of theoretical guidance for the latter line of research calls for new theories or models that specifically address such forced instructional changes in response to emergencies or crises in higher education, such as the COVID-19 pandemic we find ourselves facing today."* (**This sentence elaborates on the theoretical significance of the study. It not only explains the distinction between two types of changes—planned voluntary change and urgent inevitable change—but also highlights the gaps in existing literature, advocating for the**

development of new theoretical frameworks to better address these forced changes. By identifying a lack of theoretical guidance in this area, the authors make a strong case for their research's theoretical contribution and its potential to shape future studies.)

"In higher education, institutional intervention in response to a crisis can be implemented in two major ways: demonstrating leadership in strategically coping with a crisis by engaging faculty members in planning and then designing faculty development programs to promote innovativeness. Because information communications and technology (ICT) governance is growing in importance as an alternative to face-to-face teaching (especially when it is not feasible, as during the COVID-19 pandemic), universities need to incorporate an ICT center into their main governance system in order to support technology acceptance by faculty and improve the fidelity of instructional support." **(This paragraph discusses the practical implications of the research, offering specific recommendations for how institutions can respond to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The paragraph would benefit from a clearer introductory sentence to signal the shift from theoretical to practical implications, such as: "Additionally, this study has practical implications for faculty development in higher education." This would help the reader easily transition from understanding the theoretical contributions to grasping the practical applications.)**

Example 2, adapted from Park et al. (2015), focuses on highlighting a methodological contribution.

"Earlier, the researchers argued that the diverse perspectives regarding MOOCs demand a stronger theoretical framework. The autoethnograph revealed that the new model of MOOC learning provided a robust framework to analyse MOOC learning experiences in a productive manner." **(Here, the methodological contribution is highlighted as the main advancement. The researchers introduce a new model for analyzing MOOC learning experiences using autoethnography, an innovative method in this context. The emphasis is on how this methodological innovation contributes to a more thorough analysis of diverse learning experiences.)**

"As a consequence of this study, we hope to design a MOOC using this new model of learning derived from Carroll as a template. The word limits of this article do not permit detailing of the proposed design but this study has shown that important design heuristics can be specified for each of the twelve variables." **(In this final sentence, the authors discuss the practical application of their methodological contribution. This reinforces the contribution by suggesting how the methodology can be applied in future research and practical contexts, thus extending the study's impact beyond its immediate findings.)**

The Final Say—Ending with a Thought-Provoking Statement

The last paragraph of your conclusion is where you, as the researcher, answer the critical "so what?" question, leaving your readers with a lasting impression. This final statement is an opportunity to not only summarize your research's contributions but also to provoke further thought, inspire curiosity, or suggest practical implications. After synthesizing your introduction, results, discussion, and earlier parts of the conclusion, your closing paragraph should serve as your final word on the subject, addressing any lingering questions or implications that readers might have.

Strategies for Concluding the Conclusion Section

(1) **Motivate Further Inquiry or Change**: Your final statement can encourage readers to pursue further research on the topic, suggesting that your findings are just the beginning of a broader conversation. I find this approach particularly effective, as many of my studies identify gaps in the literature and suggest new avenues for exploration. By encouraging other researchers or practitioners to more deeply explore these areas, my conclusion can act as a catalyst for continued academic dialog or inspire real-world changes. I believe this is a compelling and dynamic way to conclude a research paper, allowing for further impact and ongoing engagement.

(2) **Share a Vision for the Future**: Another approach for the final say is to share your vision for the future of the field or the practical applications of your research. This could involve expressing optimism about potential discoveries or highlighting caution regarding challenges that may arise. By offering a vision for how the field may evolve, you encourage readers to reflect on the broader implications of your work and its ability to shape future trends. This approach also adds impact to your conclusion by connecting your research to a larger, ongoing narrative.

(3) **Inspire Anticipation and Curiosity**: Concluding with a statement that hints at potential future developments can leave your readers with a sense of anticipation. This approach is useful when your findings suggest new possibilities or questions that have yet to be fully explored. By sparking curiosity, you can engage readers, encouraging them to remain interested in the topic and perhaps even inspiring them to pursue related questions in their own research or practice.

Examples of the Final Say

Example 1, adapted from Choi et al. (2023), provides a brief, concise closing statement:

> *"We hope that this study will help readers better understand how successful faculty members solved problems, improved their teaching performance in practical and innovative ways, and managed their emotions effectively during emergency remote teaching in the COVID-19 crisis."* **(This final paragraph is brief yet impactful, summarizing the key insights from the study. It encourages readers to remember the practical solutions and emotional resilience demonstrated by faculty during the crisis. By focusing on these key factors, the conclusion leaves readers with a sense of the real-world relevance and applicability of the research.)**

Example 2, adapted from Zawacki-Richter et al. (2020), offers a more compelling closing statement, calling for change:

> *"In closing, we argue that change begins within us. Openness is our common ground; it is a core and universal value, and thus, it is time to re-explore the benefits of openness in education to meet emerging needs, advance the field, and envision a better world."* **(This**

final paragraph is more forceful and forward-looking. It calls for action, urging readers to embrace "openness," which is positioned as a universal value central to the future of education. The emphasis on openness not only ties back to the core theme of the study but also connects the research to broader societal goals, inspiring readers to consider how they can contribute to creating a more open and inclusive educational landscape.)

Checklist: Key Strategies for Writing an Effective Conclusion

- Begin by briefly summarizing the most important findings of your research, focusing on the key message you want readers to remember.
- Address the significance of your research in a broader academic or practical context, answering the "so what?" question and highlighting its impact.
- Discuss how your research contributes to theoretical understanding, whether by addressing gaps, refining models, or introducing methodological innovations.
- Emphasize practical contributions by demonstrating how your findings can influence real-world applications and policy changes or provide recommendations for practitioners.
- Include limitations and suggest future research directions to provide a pathway for continued study, if not already covered in the Discussion section.
- Conclude with a thought-provoking statement or vision for the future, motivating further inquiry and highlighting how your findings might shape upcoming research or applications.

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Chapter 18
Week 12: Finalizing References and Ensuring Consistency

Abstract This chapter focuses on finalizing the references for your paper, ensuring that all cited sources in your text are accurately listed according to the required citation style. Proper citation is crucial to avoid plagiarism, and it is recommended that references make up no more than 20% of the total word count. For example, in a 6000-word paper, the reference list should be limited to around 1200 words or approximately 50 references. As you organize your references, it is also an ideal time to review and refine both your abstract and conclusion. Ensure that the abstract clearly summarizes the key points of your research and that the conclusion is consistent with the abstract, reflecting the findings and contributions of your study.

Reference Management

References play a crucial role in academic writing, as they validate the sources of your information and reinforce the credibility of your research. Effective organization of references not only streamlines the writing process but also ensures that your work meets scholarly standards. Belcher's (2019) Week 5 section provides insightful strategies for selecting and citing references accurately while avoiding various types of plagiarism.

Guidelines for Selecting References

(1) **Prioritize High-quality, Peer-reviewed Sources**: It is essential to reference materials from reputable sources to enhance the scholarly value of your work. When planning to publish your work in top-tier, mid-tier, or lower-tier journals, it is important to focus on peer-reviewed sources, as they are widely regarded

for their credibility and rigor. Although there may be instances where citing non-academic books, unpublished dissertations, or blogs is necessary, such references should be minimal and carefully justified.

(2) **Include Only Sources Cited in Your Text**: Avoid listing every piece of literature you have encountered during your research. Your reference list should only contain sources that you have directly cited within your text. This is a key difference between a reference list and a bibliography: the former includes only cited works, while the latter may list additional, uncited works relevant to your research.

(3) **Ensure Relevance to Your Research**: Each reference should have a clear connection to your research question or hypothesis. Citing irrelevant or vaguely related sources can detract from the focus and credibility of your work. Carefully evaluate the role each reference plays in supporting your argument or providing essential background information.

(4) **Balance between Recent and Foundational Studies**: While it is critical to include recent studies to stay updated with the latest developments in your field, foundational works are equally important. These classic studies often form the theoretical or methodological backbone of the discipline. For instance, if your research involves online education, do not solely rely on post-internet sources; also incorporate literature on distance learning that predates the internet to provide a more comprehensive framework.

(5) **Diversify References by Context and Geography**: Ensure that your reference list is not skewed toward literature from countries or regions with the most well-established academic fields or abundant English-language resources. By including domestic and international literature, as well as non-English sources when relevant, you add richness and diversity to your research. This broadened perspective is especially crucial in fields like social sciences, where regional and cultural contexts can significantly influence findings.

By following these strategies, you will ensure that your references not only support your research but also enhance its depth, scope, and academic rigor.

Guidelines for Citing and Organizing References

(1) **Maximize the Use of Reference Management Tools**: Using reference management software can greatly simplify the organization, formatting, and retrieval of your references. As discussed in Chap. 5 of this guide, smart tools like EndNote, Mendeley, or Zotero assist you with the process of managing citations. These tools allow you to store references, generate reference lists, and insert citations into your manuscript with minimal effort.

- **EndNote**: This comprehensive reference management tool offers extensive features for organizing and formatting references according to various citation styles. It integrates well with word processing software, enabling quick and accurate citation insertion.
- **Mendeley**: In addition to reference management, Mendeley functions as an academic social network, making it particularly effective for collaborating and sharing references with co-researchers.
- **Zotero**: A free, open-source tool, Zotero is simple to use and integrates well with web browsers. It allows you to save references directly from web pages, making it a convenient choice for gathering online sources.

(2) **Organize All References Consistently**: Consistency in your reference list is key to maintaining professionalism and clarity in your work. Ensure that all references follow the same citation style throughout your manuscript. Different styles (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago) have distinct rules for formatting books, journal articles, websites, videos, and more. Even when using reference management tools, it is important to double-check that your references are consistently formatted according to the required style. Inconsistencies, such as using different citation styles or incorrect formatting, can detract from the overall quality of your work.

(3) **Follow the Journal's Citation Style**: When submitting your manuscript to a journal, it is crucial to adhere strictly to the journal's required citation style. Each journal may have specific guidelines for formatting references, and failure to follow these can lead to delays or even rejection of your submission. In the social sciences, common citation styles include APA, MLA, and Chicago, though some journals may have their own unique style. Carefully review the journal's submission guidelines and ensure your references align with the required format.

- **APA Style**: The APA (American Psychological Association) style is frequently used in social sciences. Detailed guidelines can be found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, available for purchase or consultation through the APA website.
- **MLA Style**: Commonly used in the humanities, the MLA (Modern Language Association) style guidelines are accessible via the *MLA Handbook* and the official MLA website.
- **Chicago Style**: The *Chicago Manual of Style* is widely used in a range of disciplines, including history and the arts. It is available online through the official website.

I strongly recommend using **Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)** as a top resource for citation styles and writing strategies. Purdue OWL provides clear, concise explanations of various citation formats, along with essential tips for avoiding plagiarism and improving academic writing. It offers detailed guidance on APA, MLA, and Chicago styles, making it an invaluable tool throughout the research and writing process.

Recommended Length of References List

(1) **Limit References to No More than 20% of the Total Word Count**: Although journal author guidelines rarely specify a maximum percentage of references, a general rule of thumb is to keep references within 20% of the total word count. This ensures that the main text remains the primary focus of your paper. For instance, in a 6000-word manuscript, aim to keep your reference section within 1200 words, which would typically equate to about 50 references. This balance allows for more space to present your research findings and discussions without overloading the reader with citations.

(2) **Include Only Essential Sources**: To keep your reference section concise and relevant, only cite sources that are directly related to your research. There is no need to include every piece of literature you have read, as this can lead to an overburdened reference list that detracts from the main arguments of your study. It is acceptable to cite your own previously published works, but only if they are relevant to the current study. In literature reviews, focus on major references that contribute meaningfully to your analysis, and limit the reference list to works cited within the text. Avoid listing all the sources you consulted unless they directly inform your findings or conclusions.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

Avoiding plagiarism at all costs is crucial to maintaining academic integrity and credibility in your research. Even unintentional plagiarism can have serious consequences, so when in doubt, it is important to seek guidance from experienced researchers, advisors, editors, or librarians. They can help clarify citation rules and ensure your work properly acknowledges the contributions of others. Some suggestions for avoiding plagiarism include consulting reliable resources on citation styles, using plagiarism detection tools, and reviewing your work for proper attribution. Check the following general guidelines:

(1) **Accurately Cite All Sources Referenced in the Text**: To avoid plagiarism, ensure that all sources cited in the text are accurately recorded in your reference list. Each citation in your manuscript must correspond to an entry in the reference section. Be sure not to cite works that you have not read or that are irrelevant to your research. Incorrect or incomplete citations can raise suspicions of plagiarism, even if unintentional, so it is essential to double-check the accuracy of your citations and their relevance to the content.

(2) **List References Alphabetically by the Surname of the First Author**: Organize your reference list alphabetically, starting with the surname of the first author. For sources without an author, use the first letter of the title for alphabetical sorting. If you are citing multiple works by the same author, list them in chronological order from oldest to most recent. Since different citation styles

(APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) have specific formatting rules, be sure to follow the style guidelines required by the journal or institution. Proper organization of your references enhances the professionalism and readability of your manuscript.

(3) **No Need to Include Personal Communications in the Reference List**: Only include sources that can be accessed by readers in your reference list. Personal communications—such as emails, interviews, memos, and letters—should not be included in the reference list, as these sources are typically not accessible to others. Instead, cite personal communications directly within the text. Again, keep in mind that citation styles vary slightly, so review the guidelines to ensure proper handling of these citations.

For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, you can also consult the guidelines provided by universities, journals, and academic associations. Additionally, Houghton and Houghton (2019) offer useful strategies for preventing plagiarism.

Final Check of Abstract and Conclusion

The abstract and conclusion are critical sections of your paper, often determining whether readers will engage further with your work. Imagine reading a lengthy paper—your decision to continue might hinge on the abstract or a quick glance at the conclusion. In Chap. 10, we discussed strategies for writing an effective abstract, and in Chap. 17, we covered techniques for crafting a strong conclusion. Now, it is time to review and refine both sections, ensuring consistency, clarity, and coherence between them.

Reviewing and Refining the Abstract

(1) **Ensure Clarity and Conciseness**: Abstracts are typically 150–250 words and should be easily understandable. At this stage, check for any unnecessary details or overly complex language. Technical terms should be used sparingly and only when essential for understanding. The goal is to provide a clear, concise summary of your research that will engage readers and give them a reason to explore your paper further.

(2) **Include Key Research Content**: A well-structured abstract typically contains the following elements: (1) the research background, (2) the research objectives or problems, (3) the methodology, (4) key findings, and (5) conclusions or implications. At this stage, ensure that each of these components is included and that they collectively give the reader a clear understanding of your study.

The abstract should reflect the essence of your work without going too deeply into specifics.

(3) **Provide a Comprehensive Overview of the Study**: The abstract should be able to stand alone, offering a summary of the research without requiring the reader to consult the entire paper. As you refine this section, avoid overly technical jargon and make sure that the main ideas are communicated through simple yet precise language. This helps guarantee that a broader audience can grasp the significance of your work.

Reviewing and Refining the Conclusion

(1) **Summarize Research Findings and Ensure Consistency with the Abstract**: The conclusion should begin by briefly summarizing the key findings of your research. At this stage, confirm that the findings presented in the conclusion align with those outlined in the abstract. This consistency ensures that the abstract and conclusion work together cohesively, reinforcing the main points of your study.

(2) **Discuss the Contributions of the Research and Align with the Abstract**: The conclusion should also highlight how your research contributes to the existing body of knowledge and its practical implications. At this point, confirm that the contributions you discuss in the conclusion are consistent with those mentioned in the abstract. This will help maintain coherence between the two sections and present a unified message about the significance of your work.

(3) **Finalize the Concluding Statement**: The last paragraph of your conclusion should present your final thoughts, tying everything back to the research objectives or questions posed in the abstract. As you refine this part, ensure that the concluding statement reinforces the purpose of your study and leaves the reader with a clear understanding of your research's overall importance.

Examples of the Abstract and Conclusion Consistency

The following examples emphasize the importance of maintaining consistency between the abstract and the conclusion. Examples 1 and 2 are concise, hypothetical cases, while Example 3 is adapted from an actual research paper.

Example 1 is arbitrarily created to check for consistency between the abstract and conclusion.

> **Abstract**: *"This study investigates the impact of social media usage on the academic performance of high school students. Through a quantitative analysis of survey data from 500 students, the research finds a significant negative correlation between time spent on social media and academic performance. The implications for educational policy and student time management are discussed."*

Conclusion 1: *"The findings of this study indicate that excessive social media usage is detrimental to high school students' academic performance. The study offers policymakers directions to consider integrating social media awareness programs into the curriculum and provides guidance for researchers in exploring the impact of specific social media platforms on different aspects of student life."*

Conclusion 2: *"The findings of this study indicate that excessive social media usage is detrimental to high school students' academic performance, **confirming a significant negative correlation between time spent on social media and academic outcomes**. The study offers educational policymakers suggestions to consider integrating social media awareness programs into the curriculum to **help students manage their time more effectively**. Additionally, the study provides guidance for researchers in exploring the impact of specific social media platforms on different aspects of student life. **This includes investigating how platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok affect students' mental health, social interactions, extracurricular involvement, and overall well-being.**"* (The sections highlighted in italics and bold show revised and supplemented sentences.)

Analysis of Consistency between Abstract and Conclusions: The abstract reports a negative correlation between social media usage and academic performance, and Conclusion 1 aligns with this finding. However, Conclusion 2 provides a more detailed and comprehensive summary, not only reinforcing the abstract's findings but also expanding on the implications. This refinement makes Conclusion 2 more insightful and actionable, particularly for policymakers and future researchers.

Example 2 is also arbitrarily created to check the consistency between the abstract and conclusion.

Abstract: *"This study examines the impact of collaborative online discussion practices on team project outcomes at 12 universities across three countries. Through an analysis of data from 40 online project teams, the research identifies a significant positive relationship between structured communication protocols during online discussions and successful project completion rates. The study discusses the implications for communication strategies in collaborative online activities, emphasizing the improvement of team performance and cross-cultural collaboration in online environments."*

Conclusion 1: *"The findings of this study demonstrate a significant positive relationship between structured communication protocols during online discussions and successful project completion rates in university team projects. Implementing clear and consistent communication practices is essential for enhancing the performance and effectiveness of online collaborative teams. The study contributes to the field by suggesting future research into identifying specific elements of communication protocols that yield the highest success rates in online academic settings. It also offers practical recommendations for educators to develop structured communication guidelines that improve coordination, reduce misunderstandings, and lead to better project outcomes in online learning environments."*

Conclusion 2: *"The findings of this study demonstrate a significant positive relationship between structured communication protocols during online discussions and successful project completion rates in university team projects across three countries. Implementing clear and consistent communication practices is crucial for enhancing the performance and effectiveness of online collaborative teams. The study contributes to the field by suggesting future research into identifying the most effective elements of communication protocols and* **examining their applicability across different cultural and educational contexts***. Practically, it recommends that educators develop structured communication guidelines, including specific protocols for online discussion frequency, participation expectations, and methods for resolving misunderstandings or conflicts. These strategies can improve coordination, reduce misunderstandings, and lead to better project outcomes in online academic settings.* **Overall, this study highlights the importance of strategic communication management in optimizing the success of collaborative online learning projects in diverse, cross-cultural environments."** (The sections highlighted in italics and bold indicate revised and supplemented sentences.)

Analysis of Consistency between Abstract and Conclusions: The abstract in Example 2 identifies a positive correlation between structured communication protocols during online discussions and successful project completion rates, and Conclusion 1 reflects this finding. However, Conclusion 2 offers a more detailed discussion by incorporating specific recommendations and expanding the research implications. This broader scope makes Conclusion 2 a more refined and practical summary, providing greater value for both academic and educational practitioners, particularly in the context of online and cross-cultural collaboration.

Example 3 is adapted from Jung and Lee (2022).

Abstract: *"The aim of this study was to develop and validate a multidimensional open thinking scale (OTS) to measure adult learners' open thinking as a key learning outcome of open educational practices (OEP) through a three-phase process of item generation, theoretical analysis, and psychometric analysis. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses of data from 610 students in 24 countries revealed a clear structure consisting of six constructs of open thinking: openness to multiple perspectives, openness to new learning, openness to collaboration, openness to sharing, openness to change, and openness to diversity and inclusion. Known-groups validity tests showed that the more frequently a learner is exposed to OEP, the higher the OTS scores obtained. Results suggest that OTS could contribute to OEP and research by defining and elaborating on the concept of open thinking, exploring its relationship to learners' OEP experiences, and measuring and developing students' open thinking."*

Conclusion: *"The results of this study support the originally proposed conceptualization of the OTS and establish the scale's content validity, construct validity, and reliability. We hope that the scale will contribute to open education research by defining and elaborating on the concept of open thinking as a key learning*

outcome of open education. In addition, we hope that our findings of a relationship between OEP and open thinking will help enrich educators' ideas about open thinking, enabling them to better cultivate it in their students and, in so doing, obtain measurable learning outcomes."

Analysis of Consistency between Abstract and Conclusion: The abstract and conclusion are written in a consistent manner, both reflecting the research objectives, methods, findings, and implications. The conclusion builds on the abstract by offering additional insights into the theoretical and practical contributions of the study, ensuring coherence between the two sections.

Checklist: Key Strategies for Finalizing References and Maintaining Consistency

- Verify that all references cited in the text are included in the reference list, and only include essential sources directly related to your research.
- Limit the reference list to no more than 20% of the total word count to maintain balance.
- Use reference management tools such as EndNote, Mendeley, or Zotero to efficiently organize and format references.
- Apply the required citation style consistently throughout your reference list and double-check for uniformity.
- Review your abstract and conclusion to ensure they are concise, clear, and easy to read.
- Cross-check the consistency between your abstract and conclusion to ensure they reflect the same research outcomes and implications.

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Chapter 19
Week 13: Final Editing and Formatting Your Paper

Abstract This chapter covers the essential tasks of editing and formatting your paper. While content revisions may continue up until submission, the focus at this stage is on balancing creativity with technical precision. The "art" of editing involves structuring content effectively, crafting engaging headings and subheadings and expressing ideas with originality. On the other hand, "technique" refers to adhering to writing standards, following journal guidelines, and ensuring consistent citation styles. The goal is to merge artistic creativity with technical accuracy to enhance clarity, readability, and professionalism. This chapter provides a step-by-step guide to completing a final edit, ensuring your manuscript is polished and ready for publication.

Keywords Content editing · Copy editing · Citation styles · Ethical considerations · Formatting guidelines · Professional editing

Understanding and Applying Journal Requirements

Scope and Aim

When you initially select a journal, you likely ensure that your research is aligned with the journal's focus and objectives. Now, with a completed draft in hand, it is essential to revisit this alignment. Carefully review the journal's stated scope to confirm that your research still fits within its aims. This step is particularly important as research can evolve during the writing process, potentially shifting focus. Reviewing recent articles published in the journal can also provide a clearer understanding of its current focus and editorial direction. Remember, submitting a manuscript that falls outside the journal's scope significantly decreases the likelihood of acceptance, regardless of the quality of your work.

Author Guidelines

As stressed several times throughout this guide, it is crucial to thoroughly examine the author guidelines provided by your chosen journal. These guidelines often include specific instructions regarding manuscript formatting, file types, word counts, and the required structure of your submission. Additionally, there may be directions for including appendices or supplementary materials, which should be closely followed. Even if you initially adhered to these guidelines while drafting your manuscript, this is the time to conduct a final review to ensure complete compliance. Overlooking even small details—such as formatting inconsistencies or word count limits—can delay the review process or lead to rejection. Therefore, I advise you to follow the author guidelines meticulously, even if it may seem tedious.

Editing English Expression

Why Editing is Important

Editing should be a continuous process throughout your writing journey, especially for an academic paper. Many publishers and professional organizations specify different types of editing. For example, Taylor & Francis, a global publisher, outlines four essential types of editing (See https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-your-research/writing-your-paper/research-paper-editing/#:~:text=Benefits%20of%20editing&text=The%20effectiveness%20of%20your%20writing,presented%20in%20the%20best%20way.):

(1) **Content Editing**: This focuses on the overall structure and presentation of your research. It involves checking whether your paper makes sense, has a logical flow, and clearly communicates its arguments without any major gaps in reasoning.
(2) **Copy Editing**: This stage involves correcting spelling, punctuation, grammar, and word choice to enhance the clarity and quality of your writing.
(3) **Line Editing**: This is a detailed review of word choice and sentence structure, focusing on clarity and impact. It addresses imitative phrasing, run-on sentences, and overly complex expressions to make your writing clear and concise.
(4) **Mechanical Editing**: The final step ensures your paper adheres to the specific style guide required by your chosen journal, checking details like formatting, citations, and overall conformity to journal guidelines.

   Careful and thorough editing of all these types is essential for several reasons:

(1) **Clarity and Precision**: Academic writing demands clear, precise language to effectively communicate complex ideas. Poorly edited text can result in misunderstandings or misinterpretations of your research findings, undermining the impact of your arguments.

(2) **Professionalism and Credibility**: A well-edited paper reflects attention to detail, enhancing your professionalism and credibility as a researcher. Grammatical errors, awkward phrasing, or inconsistencies can diminish the perceived quality of your work and cast doubt on the reliability of your findings.

(3) **Meeting Journal Standards**: High-quality academic journals expect manuscripts to meet strict language standards. Poorly edited submissions are more likely to face rejection or require substantial revisions. Polished, clear writing not only meets journal expectations but also makes the peer-review process smoother, increasing the likelihood of publication.

(4) **Accessibility for a Global Readership**: Research published in international journals reaches a global audience. Using clear, concise language ensures that your work is accessible to non-native English speakers, thereby broadening the reach and impact of your research on a worldwide scale.

(5) **Engagement and Comprehension**: A well-edited paper is easier and more engaging to read, increasing the chances that readers will fully understand your work. Well-crafted writing encourages readers to cite and build upon your research, further extending its influence in the academic community.

Remember that the international experts featured in Chap. 2 all emphasize the crucial role of continuous editing and re-editing in producing high-quality academic work. They stress that this process is not just about correcting errors, but about refining and clarifying your ideas to ensure that your arguments are as precise and coherent as possible. For practical advice from a professional editor, see Davison's (2024) book, which explores the art of scholarly journal editing.

Strategies for Editing English Expression

Adopting a structured approach to editing the English in your paper can significantly improve its overall clarity and professionalism. Multiple rounds of careful editing will ensure that your work is polished and ready for submission. Below is a suggested sequence to follow:

(1) **Self-review and Revision**:

- **Read aloud**: As the researcher, reading your text aloud can help you identify awkward phrasing, overly complex sentences, and other expression issues. Hearing the text allows you to notice things you might otherwise miss when reading silently.
- **Use active voice and direct structure**: Ensure your writing is clear and concise, with topic sentences leading each paragraph and a preference for active voice to make your arguments more direct and engaging.
- **Take time between drafts**: Step away from your writing for a while before returning to edit. This break provides a fresh perspective on your text, helping

you spot errors and improve clarity more effectively. I find this approach highly effective and time-saving in the long run.

(2) **Peer Review and Feedback**:

- **Seek feedback**: Ask peers or your advisor to review the manuscript. They can provide valuable insights into both the content and the quality of your language, helping to catch errors or unclear sections you may have overlooked.
- **Exchange papers**: Consider exchanging your paper with other researchers who are also in the writing stage. Mutual critique can provide fresh perspectives on language and expression while helping both parties improve their work.

(3) **Utilize Smart Tools**:

- **Leverage technology**: If you have already used tools like ChatGPT during the drafting process, reuse them during final edits. These tools can help you refine the clarity, consistency, and flow of your language.
- **Use advanced AI tools**: Consider using advanced versions (typically paid) of AI-based tools, such as upgraded ChatGPT models or other sophisticated writing software, to help fine-tune your manuscript. Refer to Chap. 5 for further recommendations on these tools.

(4) **Consider Professional Editing Services**:

- **Professional editors**: If you are unsure about the accuracy of your expressions after self-editing with AI tools, professional academic editors can help ensure that your language meets the required standards. I have had one instance where a hired editor simply ran my paper through ChatGPT and sent the AI-edited version back to me without making any additional adjustments. It was a disappointing experience. Be mindful of such occurrences when working with editors.
- **Freelance and native speakers**: Alternatively, you can seek assistance from freelance editors with expertise in your field or ask a native English-speaking colleague to review your paper for any remaining language issues. In my experience, while advanced versions of AI tools like ChatGPT can be helpful for editing, they sometimes favor expressions that are not commonly used in specific academic fields. Your colleagues are more likely to catch these nuances and ensure the language aligns with the conventions of your discipline.

Remember, it is only through multiple rounds of revision that you can significantly improve both the content and expression of your final paper, ensuring it is clear, polished, and ready for publication.

Reviewing the Structure of Your Paper

Paper Structure and Headings

I strongly recommend revisiting the relevant chapters of this guide to review your paper's structure and headings. While the basic structure outlined in Chap. 8 provides a solid foundation, feel free to adapt it to meet the specific needs of your research. The structure should not only guide the reader through your work but also reflect the depth and organization of your ideas. Headings and subheadings play a crucial role in this process, as they provide clear signposts that help readers navigate the content easily. Well-crafted headings should accurately convey the subject matter of each section while capturing the reader's attention. Additionally, they should be hierarchical, with primary headings giving an overview of major sections and subheadings breaking down the details. Ensuring that your headings and subheadings are concise, descriptive, and reflective of the content beneath them will enhance the readability and coherence of your paper. Thoughtfully designed headings and subheadings can also improve the paper's flow, making complex information more accessible to a broader audience.

Many university writing centers provide valuable tips on effectively incorporating headings and subheadings in academic papers, offering useful guidance to enhance the clarity and organization of your work. Citation styles like APA and MLA also offer specific guidelines for formatting headings and subheadings.

Utilizing ChatGPT

ChatGPT can be an invaluable tool for revising and refining the structure, headings, and subheadings of your paper. It offers a fresh perspective and can help ensure that your work is coherent and well-organized. Refer to the prompt examples in Chap. 9 to maximize the effectiveness of this tool. Consider the following practical examples:

- **Prompt Example 1**: "I am writing an academic paper. Could you review its structure, headings, and subheadings and provide feedback on the following aspects? (1) Is the overall structure logical and coherent? (2) Do the titles accurately reflect the content and catch attention? (3) Are the subheadings clear and appropriate for their respective sections? List all the suggestions you have for each aspect."
- **Prompt Example 2**: "I am in the process of finalizing my academic paper and need your input on its structure, headings, and subheadings. Could you review these aspects and make suggestions: (1) The logical flow and coherence of the paper's structure, (2) The accuracy and relevance of the headings in conveying the paper's main themes, and (3) The clarity and appropriateness of the subheadings for each section."

Checking the Title Page and Main Text

The title page requirements may vary slightly depending on the journal, but it typically includes the paper's title, the names of all authors, their institutional affiliations, and the contact information of the corresponding author. Some journals may also require acknowledgments or funding sources, so be sure to check the author guidelines carefully for any additional information to include.

Abstract

Revisit the relevant chapters to ensure your abstract is concise, clear, and effectively summarizes the study's main objectives, methods, results, and conclusions. The abstract should fit within the journal's required word limit. Avoid the use of complex jargon, unnecessary citations, and undefined abbreviations to make your abstract more accessible to a broader audience.

Keywords

Review the selected keywords to confirm they accurately reflect the paper's main topics and themes, as required by the journal. Keywords are crucial for indexing and increasing the discoverability of your paper, so ensure they are precise and representative of your research focus.

Introduction, Methods, Results/Findings, Discussion, Conclusion

Thoroughly review these sections again, with particular attention to the headings and subheadings. Evaluate whether the headings and subheadings could be clearer and more engaging for readers. Utilize AI tools to assist in refining these aspects. For instance, consider prompts like:

- **Prompt Example 1**: "I am refining the headings and subheadings for my academic paper. Please (1) check if each heading/subheading is clear and easily understandable for readers, and (2) suggest improvements to make the heading/subheading more engaging and attention-grabbing."
- **Prompt Example 2**: "As I review my academic paper, I need your input on the headings and subheadings for each section. Please: (1) assess whether the headings and subheadings are straightforward and comprehensible for readers, (2) recommend any modifications to make them more engaging and appealing."

Reviewing Formatting According to Guidelines

As you finalize your manuscript, ensure it fully adheres to the author guidelines, paying close attention to the following elements.

Font and Spacing

Most journals recommend standard fonts like Times New Roman or Arial, size 12, and either single or double spacing. Double-check the journal's author guidelines to ensure you meet all formatting requirements, including margins, font size, and spacing.

Titles (Headings)

Ensure that the hierarchy and numbering of titles or headings follow the journal's preferred citation style. Refer to the author guidelines and review previously published articles to confirm whether numbering, bold, or italics should be used for titles (headings) and subtitles (subheadings). Proper formatting enhances readability and organization, helping your manuscript meet the journal's expectations.

Revisit the numbering and titles of all figures and tables to ensure they comply with the journal's style guidelines. Confirm that the resolution of images meets the required standards and that figure and table titles are clear and concise.

Page Numbers

Again, refer to the journal's guidelines to determine whether page numbers should be included. Some journals request no page numbers, while others specify their placement (e.g., top right or centered at the bottom of the page). Ensure compliance with these requirements.

Units and Abbreviations

Ensure that units are consistently used according to the International System of Units (SI) and in line with the author guidelines. I find this website (https://www.nist.gov/pml/owm/metric-si/si-units) helpful. For abbreviations, verify that all abbreviations

are defined upon their first use in the text, and consider including a list of abbreviations
if many are used.

Reviewing Citations and References

It may seem tedious, but even minor formatting errors in citations and references can
affect the evaluation of your manuscript. Pay close attention to the following:

Citation Style

Double-check that your citations conform to the citation style required by the journal
(e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago). Even if you have used reference management software,
it is essential to review your citations manually for any errors or inconsistencies.

In-Text Citations

Confirm that all sources cited in the text appear in the reference list, with the authors'
names and publication years accurately and consistently presented.

Reference List

Format the reference list according to the author guidelines of the journal, paying
attention to details such as punctuation, capitalization, and order.

Reviewing Ethical Considerations

Conduct a final review of the ethical considerations involved in your manuscript,
addressing the following aspects.

Plagiarism

Even though I am confident that I have not violated any plagiarism rules, I still run
plagiarism detection software again to ensure my manuscript is free of unintended

plagiarism and to check for any similarities with other papers. It is essential to rigorously cite all sources according to the required citation style.

Permissions

If your manuscript contains previously published materials—such as figures, tables, assessment tools, or lengthy text excerpts—ensure you have obtained permission from the copyright holder. Include a statement in your paper acknowledging the permissions received, such as: "*I have received permission from the copyright owner to use the 'Student Engagement Survey' for my research. This permission was granted by Dr. Kathy Capper on June 15, 2024, allowing me to use and reproduce the instrument as part of my research activities.*"

Conflict of Interest

Ensure that any financial or personal relationships that could influence the research results are disclosed. All funding sources and any potential conflicts of interest related to the authors' affiliations should be transparently reported.

Example 1 (No conflict of interest):

> *"The author confirms that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this publication. No financial or personal relationships have influenced the research or findings presented in this paper."*

Example 2 (Potential conflict of interest due to a co-author's affiliation):

> *"The authors disclose that one co-author, Kathy Capper, is affiliated with A Company, which may be perceived as a potential conflict of interest. However, the research was conducted with the utmost integrity, and the results are based solely on the data and analysis performed."*

After meticulously editing, formatting, and reviewing your manuscript, you are ready to submit your paper. Be sure to follow the journal's submission process carefully and include all necessary documents. Stay tuned for Chap. 20, which will guide you through the submission and peer-review process.

Checklist: Key Tips for Final Editing and Formatting

- Ensure your research aligns with the journal's scope and aims before submission.
- Follow the journal's author guidelines meticulously, including formatting, word count, and citation style.

- Conduct multiple rounds of editing to refine clarity, precision, and readability, focusing on content and copy editing.
- Use concise, well-structured headings and subheadings to improve navigation for readers.
- Leverage AI tools or professional editors to enhance language clarity and accuracy.
- Double-check citations and references, and run plagiarism detection software to avoid unintentional issues.
- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest and ensure permissions are granted for any previously published materials.

Reference

Davison, R. M. (2024). *The humble art of journal editing.* Springer.

Chapter 20
Week 14: Submission and Handling Review Results

Abstract Now, the moment has arrived!! You have meticulously crafted your research paper and formatted it according to your chosen journal's guidelines. It is finally time to submit it for international publication. In this chapter, I guide you through the final phase of academic publishing: submitting your manuscript and managing the outcomes of peer review. You will find a step-by-step breakdown of the submission process, with an emphasis on following journal protocols and maintaining professional communication with editors. Additionally, I offer strategies for addressing various review outcomes—whether it is acceptance, revision, or rejection—providing practical advice for revising and resubmitting your work. This chapter equips you with the essential tools to navigate the review process, improve your manuscript, manage your emotions, and increase your chances of success in academic publishing.

Submitting Your Paper

Once you have chosen a suitable international journal for your research topic and prepared your manuscript in line with the author guidelines, you are ready to submit. Before proceeding, it is essential to carefully review the following key points to ensure a smooth submission process.

General Considerations

(1) **Avoid Simultaneous Submissions**: It is important to note that you cannot submit the same manuscript to multiple journals simultaneously. This practice, known as simultaneous submission, is considered unethical in academic publishing.

Regardless of whether the submissions are in different languages, you must only submit to one journal at a time. Violating this rule can damage your reputation as a researcher and may result in the rejection of your manuscript from all journals involved.

(2) **Year-round Submission Windows**: Most international journals, particularly in the social sciences, accept submissions on a rolling basis throughout the year, with no specific deadlines. This flexibility allows you to submit your manuscript when it is thoroughly prepared, without the added pressure of meeting a particular deadline. However, always confirm the journal's submission policy, as some journals may have special issues or themed calls for papers with deadlines.

(3) **Being Cautious with Predatory Journals**: Be cautious of journals that require submission fees. I have never encountered any international journals that charge authors to submit manuscripts. If a journal requests an upfront fee just to review your submission, it may be a red flag signaling a predatory journal. Ensure that you carefully research the journal's reputation before submitting your work. For details on predatory journals, refer to Chap. 4 of this guide.

The Submission Process

The submission process involves several detailed steps to ensure that your manuscript is properly evaluated and reviewed. Here is a general outline of the submission process:

(1) **Creating an Account**: Most journals require authors to create an account on their online submission platform. This account allows you to submit your manuscript and track its progress. In addition to registering on the journal's website, it is advisable to sign up with ORCID (https://orcid.org) to obtain a unique researcher identification number, which many journals now recommend for proper author identification and tracking across publications.

(2) **Preparing and Submitting the Manuscript**: Once your author account is set up, you can begin the submission process. Ensure that your manuscript follows the journal's specific guidelines, which are generally straightforward and easy to follow. This typically includes uploading the manuscript in formats like .doc, .docx, or .pdf, along with a cover letter, abstract, the main text, and any required supplementary materials (e.g., figures, tables, or datasets). Carefully follow each journal's instructions regarding formatting, file size limits, and any additional documents needed for submission. In some cases, journals may request submissions via email instead of through an online system, so make sure to follow the proper submission method.

(3) **Tracking Submission Status**: After submitting your manuscript, the journal's submission system allows you to track its progress, including stages like confirmation of receipt, reviewer assignment, and pending decisions. Regularly checking the submission portal helps you stay updated and anticipate when a decision might be made. However, I personally prefer to step back and not check

the status for a month or so. If the process seems to be taking too long, I simply reach out to the editor for an update. It is really a matter of preference—whether you choose to be patient or keep a closer eye on the progress is up to you.

(4) **Communication with the Editor**: During the submission and review process, I recommend staying in communication with the journal's editor or editorial team. If you have any questions or concerns or need clarification on the status of your submission, you can contact them through the journal's official communication channels. In my experience, most editors are responsive and provide timely updates or address any issues that arise during the submission and review stages.

(5) **Waiting for Review Rsults**: After submitting your manuscript, you will need to wait for the peer-review process to be completed. The length of this process varies depending on the journal and the availability of reviewers, but typically, authors can expect a response within 1–6 months. Review results are usually sent via email, and the feedback may include a decision to accept, revise, or reject your manuscript. Patience is key during this phase, as the review process can take time depending on its complexity and the availability of reviewers. I am sure you have plenty of other tasks to focus on while you wait.

Review Outcomes and How to Respond

Before proceeding, it is advisable to revisit Chap. 3, which covers the submission process for international journals. Here is how to handle different outcomes after submitting your manuscript.

Rejection During Initial Screening or Desk Review

You will typically receive a decision within days or weeks after submission. If your paper does not align with the journal's scope or if the editor feels the quality does not meet their standards, it may be rejected at this early stage. When I received my first upfront rejection email, I was devastated and could not think about anything else. I withdrew for a few days, keeping quiet and processing the disappointment. Eventually, I came to terms with it and realized that I had nothing to lose by writing a brief acknowledgment email, politely requesting feedback, even though my paper had been rejected. Here are my recommendations for how to respond:

(1) **Email Reply**: Send a brief, professional thank-you email to the editor. If you wish to request feedback or suggestions for other journals, feel free to ask.
   Sample Reply:
   Dear Editor [Name],
   I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to acknowledge the receipt of your decision regarding my paper, titled "[Title of Your Paper with the Manuscript ID]," which was submitted to [Journal Name].

While I am disappointed to learn that my paper did not pass the initial review stage, I appreciate the time and effort you and your team have invested in reviewing my submission. I understand that the high standards and specific scope of your journal necessitate rigorous screening, and I respect your decision.

To help improve my work, could you offer any feedback or specific reasons for the rejection? Your information would be extremely valuable as I work to refine my manuscript for submission elsewhere or for further research.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to the possibility of submitting future work to your journal.

Best regards,

[Your Full Name and Affiliation]

(2) **Next Steps**: If you are fortunate enough to receive feedback from the editor, take it into account and identify a more suitable journal. Revise your manuscript based on the feedback and the new journal's guidelines before resubmitting.

Acceptance Without Revisions (Accept as Is)

This is a rare and significant achievement that indicates your manuscript has been fully recognized for its exceptional quality and contribution to the field. Receiving an acceptance without any required revisions is an affirmation that your research, methodology, and writing have met the highest standards set by the journal. It is an acknowledgment of the hard work, dedication, and scholarly rigor you have put into your study.

Such an outcome deserves celebration, not just for yourself but also for those who supported you throughout the research process—your co-authors, supervisors, colleagues, family, and friends. It marks a major milestone in your academic journey and can be a source of pride for everyone involved. In my 30 years of research, I have received this comment twice, and each time it called for a big celebration with my co-authors and colleagues! Here is how to respond to the journal editor, while also acknowledging the role of your collaborators and expressing gratitude:

(1) **Email Reply**: Send a brief, grateful email to the editor.

Sample Reply:

Dear Editor [Name],

I hope this email finds you well. I wanted to extend my sincere gratitude for accepting my manuscript [with Manuscript ID] for publication in [Journal Name].

This decision is a rare and momentous occasion that I am celebrating with my co-authors and colleagues. Your recognition of the value and quality of our work fills us with great joy and pride.

We will proceed to make minor formatting and editorial adjustments as requested.

Thank you once again for this wonderful opportunity.

Best regards,

       [Your Full Name and Affiliation]

(2) **Next Steps**: There is no need to revise the content of the manuscript. Simply make any minor formatting or editorial adjustments as requested by the journal.

Acceptance with Minor Revisions

Receiving a request for minor revisions is also a cause for celebration, as carefully addressing the reviewers' feedback can lead to your paper being accepted for publication. If only minor revisions are requested, the editor will review the revised manuscript to make the final acceptance decision. However, if more substantial changes are required, the manuscript may be sent back to the original reviewers for further evaluation before the editor makes the final decision. The following is typically how I approach the process:

(1) **Review Feedback**: Carefully read and understand the feedback from both the reviewers and the editor. Make sure you grasp all the suggestions and requirements for revision.

(2) **Email Reply**: Send a response email to the editor, acknowledging receipt of the feedback and confirming that you will submit the revised manuscript within the journal's deadline (typically within one month). If any points need clarification, include your questions in this email. Here is a sample reply:

    Sample Reply:

    Dear Editor [Name],

    I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to express my gratitude for the acceptance of my manuscript, titled "[Title of Your Paper with the Manuscript ID]," for publication in [Journal Name], pending minor revisions.

    I greatly appreciate the reviewers' and your constructive feedback, which I found very insightful and useful for the improvement of my paper. I am committed to addressing the suggested revisions thoroughly to enhance the quality of my work. I will ensure that the revised version is submitted within the one-month timeframe specified.

    If I have any questions or require clarification regarding specific comments during the revision process, I hope it will be all right to reach out to you for further guidance. Thank you once again for this opportunity, and I look forward to submitting the revised manuscript soon.

    Best regards,

    [Your Full Name and Affiliation]

(3) **Create a Revision Schedule**: Establish a clear revision timeline to stay on track. Below is an example based on my experience with co-authors.

    Sample Timeline (One-Month Revision Period)

May 23–26:

Both authors review the feedback.

Each author suggests responses to comments and identifies which parts of the manuscript need revision.

Authors share their revision plans and finalize the schedule during a Zoom meeting on May 26.

May 27–June 5:

Both authors complete the first round of revisions on their assigned sections.

June 6–15:

The first author reviews all revisions and makes a second round of changes.

June 16–20:

The second author works on the third round of revisions.

June 21–23:

The first and corresponding authors finalize the paper and resubmit it.

(4) **Careful Revisions**: Address each reviewer's comment in detail, ensuring your revisions enhance the manuscript. When documenting changes, provide explanations for how you addressed each piece of feedback, and if you choose not to follow a suggestion, offer a valid reason. Focus on critical improvements that strengthen the paper without making unnecessary changes.

(5) **Final Edit**: Once revisions are complete, perform a final edit of the manuscript. You might consider using AI tools like ChatGPT to refine the text and ensure clarity and coherence.

(6) **Resubmission**: Submit the revised manuscript according to the journal's guidelines. Once accepted, the editor-in-chief will notify you, and the copy-editing process will begin. A journal-assigned copy editor will ensure your manuscript adheres to the journal's formatting standards and may request additional minor revisions during this stage.

Revise and Resubmit

If your manuscript fits the journal's scope but requires substantial revisions, or if key sections need significant improvement, you may receive a "revise and resubmit" decision. This typically means that the necessary revisions are extensive and cannot be completed within the usual one-month timeframe. Here is how to proceed:

(1) **Email Reply**: It is courteous to send a brief thank-you email to the editor, acknowledging their feedback. Additionally, share whether you plan to revise and resubmit to the same journal or consider submitting to other venues. You may also ask for suggestions on alternative journals.

Sample Reply:

Dear Editor [Name],

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to acknowledge the receipt of your decision regarding my paper and the recommendation to revise and resubmit.

I appreciate the reviewers' thorough and constructive feedback. While I am pleased that the topic aligns with the scope of your journal, I understand that extensive revisions are needed to address the reviewers' comments.

Considering the significant revisions required, I am deliberating whether to resubmit to your journal [Journal Name] or to explore other publication venues. Could you kindly provide any recommendations on alternative journals that might be suitable for my manuscript?

Thank you once again for your time and consideration. I look forward to your guidance and hope to have the opportunity to contribute to your journal [Journal Name] in the future.

Best regards,

[Your Full Name and Affiliation]

(2) **Revise and Next Steps**: Take the time to carefully revise your manuscript based on the reviewers' feedback. It can sometimes be challenging to decide what to do next. In such cases, I typically weigh whether to resubmit to the same journal or explore other options. If the revisions are too time-consuming or I have other pressing matters, I consider submitting the manuscript—with fewer changes—to a more suitable journal or an alternative outlet, such as a field-specific magazine.

Completely Rejected

Receiving a rejection can be disappointing, even when you recognize that your paper may have significant flaws or limited original contributions. However, after allowing yourself a day or so to process, try to shift your perspective. Remember that top-tier journals reject over 90% of submissions, and even mid-tier journals reject 50–80%. Keep in mind that the feedback provided by peer reviewers is invaluable and can significantly improve the quality of your manuscript, turning the rejection into an important learning opportunity. Here is how to respond if your manuscript is completely rejected:

(1) **Giving Yourself Time**: The first thing to do after receiving a rejection is to set the email aside and give yourself some time to process. Academia often operates within a culture of rejection, whether it is related to job applications, promotions, grant proposals, or journal publications. Scholars like Morrish (2019) criticize this binary acceptance versus rejection system, arguing that, alongside excessive workloads, it fosters a counterproductive and unhealthy environment that runs contrary to the original goals of academic inquiry and discovery.

In line with efforts to normalize rejection, as Edwards and Ashkanasy (2018) suggest, try to see rejection as a natural part of the publication process. Allow yourself to experience any negative emotions, but recognize that they are common to all academics. Over time, reframing rejection as a learning opportunity can help improve your work. For deeper discussions on reforming the rejection culture, see Allen et al. (2020).

(2) **Email Reply**: After allowing yourself time to reflect, it is a good practice to send a brief, polite thank-you email to the editor.
    Sample Reply:
    Dear Editor [Name],
    I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to acknowledge the receipt of your decision regarding my paper [Manuscript ID and Title], which was submitted to your journal [Journal Name].
    While I am disappointed by the rejection, I appreciate the thorough review and the feedback provided by you and the reviewers. All the insights and comments will be instrumental in refining and improving my work for future submissions.
    Thank you again for considering my paper. I look forward to the possibility of submitting my future research to your journal [Journal Name].
    Best regards,
    [Your Name and Affiliation]

(3) **Reviewing Feedback**: Once you are ready, carefully review the feedback provided by the reviewers. Take note of both the minor revisions they suggest and any more significant changes required. This feedback is invaluable in guiding your next steps.

(4) **Next Step**: Take the time to revise your manuscript thoroughly. Depending on the feedback, you may need to gather additional data or apply different analytical methods. As you make revisions, also consider exploring other journals that may be a better fit for your work. If extensive revisions are not feasible at the moment, focus on making more manageable changes and submit the manuscript to a different journal or alternative outlet.
    I once had a paper completely rejected by a mid-tier journal, but after making a few critical revisions based on their reviewers' feedback, I submitted it to a top-tier journal—and it was accepted! The peer-review system has its flaws, including subjectivity, as different reviewers may focus on different aspects of your work. So, don't be discouraged by rejection and shelve your paper; instead, use the feedback to improve and try again.

By taking steps that align with the submission outcome, you not only increase the chances of your revised manuscript being accepted but also improve the overall quality and influence of your research. This process of reflection, revision, and resubmission is central to academic growth and success.

Checklist: Effective Strategies for Handling Review Results

- Set the rejection email aside for a day to allow yourself time to process the decision.
- Don't be discouraged by harsh or negative comments—view them as valuable feedback to help improve your paper.

- Send a brief, courteous email to the editor, acknowledging the review outcome, regardless of whether your paper was accepted or rejected.
- Carefully review the reviewers' feedback to make strategic revisions, whether minor or substantial, and establish a clear timeline for efficient revisions.
- If the revisions are extensive, consider resubmitting to the same journal or exploring other options.
- Keep communication open with the editor for clarification on comments or submission timelines.
- Use the experience as a learning opportunity to enhance future research and writing efforts.

References

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Edwards, M. S., & Ashkanasy, N. M. (2018). Emotions and failure in academic life: Normalisingthe experience and building resilience. *Journal of Management & Organization, 24*(2),167–188. https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.20

Morrish, L. (2019). *Pressure vessels: The epidemic of poor mental health among higher education staff*. Higher Education Policy Institute London. https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/HEPI-Pressure-Vessels-Occasional-Paper-20.pdf

Chapter 21
Week 15: Post-publication Strategies and Conclusion

Abstract Congratulations! Your paper has been published in an international journal. This chapter explores what happens after publication, from potential emails you will receive to effective strategies for promoting your work to a wider audience. We will explore the importance of sharing your research using social media, email, and academic networks, as well as presenting at conferences. Finally, as we conclude this guide, I emphasize three key principles for success in academic publishing: thorough preparation, persistence, and confidence. These strategies will not only help you publish your work but also support your growth as a global scholar.

Emails You Will Receive After Your Paper is Published

Once your paper is published, various types of emails may come your way. It is important to know how to handle these communications, as they can range from legitimate requests to scams. Here are some common scenarios and how to respond.

Emails from Unknown Overseas Publishers or Journal Editors

(1) **Content**: These emails often begin with flattering comments about your research achievements and recently published paper. They might then invite you to submit your future work to their journal or publisher, claiming no publication fees and possibly offering royalties. Some may even suggest that your paper is an ideal fit for their "prestigious" publication.

(2) **My Advice**: Ignore these emails and avoid clicking on any links unless you are certain of the legitimacy of the journal or publisher. These are likely from predatory publishers or fake journals that seek to exploit unsuspecting authors.

Legitimate publishers typically do not send unsolicited emails or invite authors based solely on a few published papers. Instead, recognized journals rely on their reputation and peer-review process to attract quality submissions. Always research the credibility of any publisher or journal that approaches you before responding or considering submission.

Emails Offering Awards for Your Paper

(1) **Content**: In these emails, the sender may claim that your newly published paper is so exceptional that it has won an award. They will often include a link to register your details or showcase your profile on their platform as part of the award recognition process.

(2) **My Advice**: Be cautious and skeptical. It may be a good idea to consult with your advisor or an experienced researcher for guidance. Legitimate awards are typically granted by the journal or a reputable academic institution, and the announcement would come directly from the journal's editor or editorial team—not from a random third party. These kinds of unsolicited emails are almost always scams. Remember, true recognition for your work will come through official, well-established channels, often long after your paper has been published, not immediately.

Emails Requesting You to Review a Paper

(1) **Content**: After publishing your paper, you may receive an email from the same journal asking you to review a new manuscript submitted by another author on a similar topic. This is common practice in academia, where published researchers are often invited to contribute their expertise by serving as peer reviewers.

(2) **My Advice**: Accept the request if it fits within your schedule. Peer reviewing plays a vital role in upholding the integrity and quality of academic research, and it is an excellent way to contribute to your field. Start by reading the journal's peer-review guidelines to understand their expectations. Take time to familiarize yourself with the journal's specific reviewer guidelines, as well as its aims and scope, to ensure your review is aligned with the journal's focus. Then, carefully evaluate the manuscript, offering constructive and thoughtful feedback. Peer reviewing not only helps improve the manuscript but also keeps you up-to-date on emerging research trends while enhancing your own writing, critical thinking, and analytical skills.

Strategies for Promoting Your Paper

Once your paper is published, it is essential to actively promote it in order to reach a broader audience of researchers and readers. Below are some strategies I find effective for increasing the visibility and impact of your work.

Social Media Platforms

One of the first things I do after my paper is published is share it across multiple social media platforms. Many of my colleagues and friends work in similar fields, and they often amplify my posts by sharing them within their own networks. It is also a joy to receive congratulations and feedback from peers.

(1) **X (formerly Twitter)**: Share the link to your paper along with a brief summary or key findings. Use relevant hashtags like #Research or #HigherEd and tag colleagues, co-authors, and institutions to broaden your paper's reach. You can also engage in ongoing academic conversations by commenting on or retweeting related research.

Example X post:

> *Thrilled to announce my latest publication on emotional presence in collaborative learning! Read it here [link] #CollaborativeLearning #EmotionalPresence #ResearchImpact*

(2) **LinkedIn**: Unlike X, LinkedIn allows for a more detailed post. You can explain the context, significance, and potential impact of your research. Engage with professional groups or communities relevant to your field to spark discussions and connect with other academics.

(3) **ResearchGate**: Share your paper on ResearchGate, which is specifically designed for academic work. If your article is open access, upload the final published version. For subscription-based journals, share a preprint or upload the final manuscript version (without journal formatting) as a PDF file. You can also respond to individual requests for your paper.

(4) **Facebook**: While more informal, Facebook can be a great place to share your research in academic or subject-specific groups. Be mindful of copyright restrictions when sharing the full paper.

Email Signature

Adding a line about your recent publication to your email signature is a subtle but effective way to promote your paper. As you communicate with colleagues and students, they will see your recent work and may explore it further.

Example email signature:

Insung Jung

Visiting Research Fellow, Education Research Institute

Seoul National University, South Korea

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Newsletters and Promotional Materials

Many universities, research institutes, and academic societies publish newsletters or promotional materials. Share your new publication in these outlets to ensure that colleagues within your institution or field are aware of your research. You can also ask your institution's PR team to highlight your work on their website or social media platforms.

Academic Networking Sites

(1) **Google Scholar**: Ensure that your Google Scholar profile is up-to-date with your latest publications. If your new paper does not appear automatically, manually add it to keep your citation record current.
(2) **Academia.edu**: Share your paper on this platform, but check copyright restrictions before uploading the full text. Academia.edu also tracks metrics like who is reading your work and their location, providing insights into your paper's reach.

Conferences and Seminars

Presenting your paper at academic conferences or seminars is an excellent way to promote your research. Engaging directly with your peers at these events not only disseminates your findings but also fosters meaningful dialog and collaboration.

Be careful not to republish large sections of your paper in conference proceedings, as this may be considered a duplicate publication. You can, however, submit a short abstract or provide an oral/poster presentation with proper citations. If in doubt, consult the journal's editor or editorial team to ensure compliance and obtain permission if necessary.

Video Promotions and Multimedia Opportunities

If the journal offers opportunities for video promotion, such as creating a video abstract or short explainer video, take full advantage of it. These multimedia formats can engage a broader audience and help explain your research in an accessible way, increasing its visibility.

Conclusion: Celebrating the Journey and Looking Ahead

Hooray! After several weeks of writing and revising, it is time to celebrate. Not only am I thrilled to complete this guide, but I am equally excited for you—your paper draft is now one step closer to submission to an international journal. I sincerely hope this guide has been a valuable resource for researchers in the social sciences, particularly those in the early stages of their careers and for whom English is not their native language.

As I compiled these insights based on my own publishing experiences, I was reminded of how challenging, yet incredibly rewarding, the academic journey can be. While every chapter and step outlined in this guide is important, I want to close by highlighting three key principles that will help ensure your success: preparation, persistence, and confidence.

Preparation and Strategy: The Foundation of Success

One of the most important factors in successfully publishing a paper is thorough preparation, planning, and a strategic approach. Every stage of the writing process—from selecting the right journal and structuring your paper, to the final editing and submission—requires careful thought and organization. The earlier you start planning and the more systematically you approach each step, the better equipped you will be to handle the inevitable challenges that arise along the way.

In particular, strategic time management and attention to detail are crucial, as emphasized throughout this guide. For strategies on time management and developing effective habits, see Clear (2018). By thoroughly researching the journal's scope, studying submission guidelines, and breaking your writing process into manageable tasks, you can avoid common pitfalls and better meet deadlines. The key is to be proactive rather than reactive—anticipating obstacles and organizing your work to ensure steady progress. With this approach, this guide will serve as a valuable resource, helping you set yourself up for success from the very beginning.

Persistence: The Path to Continuous Improvement

Equally important is persistence. Writing, editing, and revising are iterative processes, and it is rare to produce a perfect paper on the first draft. In fact, receiving feedback and making revisions is one of the most valuable parts of the academic writing process. Whether it is peer feedback from colleagues, suggestions from advisors, or comments from journal reviewers, each round of revisions brings you closer to producing a stronger, clearer, and more impactful paper.

Don't be discouraged by setbacks or critical feedback—use it as an opportunity to refine your work. Often, the most significant improvements come after the initial drafts are critiqued, as fresh perspectives help uncover gaps or clarify arguments. Embrace this cyclical process of writing, reviewing, and revising as a path to continual growth. Over time, you will find that each paper you write becomes better than the last, and you will be more confident in tackling future projects.

Confidence and Enjoyment: Nurturing the Joy of Writing

Lastly, and most importantly, have confidence in yourself and enjoy the journey. Writing a paper can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially when facing long hours of research, drafting, and revision. However, it is crucial to find joy in the process itself. Celebrate your small victories, whether it is completing a particularly challenging section, receiving positive feedback, or simply learning something new along the way.

Confidence comes from believing in your abilities—believing that you can overcome obstacles, tackle complex ideas, and ultimately succeed. This belief will carry you through the more difficult phases of research and writing. At the same time, it is important to remember why you started this journey in the first place: a passion for knowledge and a desire to contribute to your field. By nurturing that passion and finding moments of enjoyment, even in the toughest times, you will stay motivated and engaged throughout the process. For insights into the power of belief and mindset, refer to Dweck (2007).

Final Words: Moving Forward with Confidence

In closing, I hope this guide has provided you with the tools and strategies to successfully navigate the challenges of writing and publishing in international journals. Embrace every stage of the journey—from the initial research to the final submission—knowing that each step contributes to your growth as a scholar. The challenges may be many, but trust me, the rewards are just as great.

As you move forward, remember to celebrate your achievements, no matter how small, and keep striving for improvement. The academic journey is one of ongoing learning, and by remaining persistent, well-prepared, and confident, you will continue to build a successful and rewarding career.

I encourage all young researchers to embrace the challenges**,** savor the sense of accomplishment, and confidently pursue their academic goals. You have the tools, the knowledge, and the resilience to succeed—and I am excited to see where this journey will take you. Best of luck on your academic journey, and I look forward to seeing your work published in the future!

Checklist: Key Strategies for Promoting Research and Sustaining Academic Success

- Share your published work on various social media and professional networks, and use their network to respond to requests and connect with peers in similar fields.
- Present your research at conferences, seminars, or workshops, fostering dialog with peers and opening doors to potential collaborations.
- Take advantage of university and institutional newsletters to promote your work, ensuring visibility among colleagues and within your academic community.
- Consider multimedia promotion, such as video abstracts, to simplify complex ideas and make your research accessible to a broader audience.
- **Thorough preparation is key**: Apply strategic time management, attention to detail, and a proactive approach to organizing your work for sustained academic success.
- **Persistence is essential**: Embrace feedback, revise continuously, and use each round of critiques to strengthen your paper, growing more confident with every iteration.
- **Confidence fuels success:** Trust your abilities, celebrate small wins, and find joy in the writing process, keeping your passion alive through the challenges.

References

Clear, J. (2018). *Atomic habits: An easy & proven way to build good habits & break bad ones.* Avery.
Dweck, C. S. (2007). *Mindset: The new psychology of success.* Ballantine Books.