

## **WRITING ARTICLES FOR PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS SOME DO'S AND DON'TS FOR BEGINNERS**

**by**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

Writing articles for professional journals can be as thrilling as well as a heart-breaking experience. It is thrilling because, the whole exercise is full of uncertainties. Will my article be accepted? When will it be published? What will the Journal's own reviewers say about it? Will they suggest too many changes? The chances are, if you have done a good job, most probably your efforts will bear fruit. All said and done, the game is always worth the candle.

[Note: 'He' in this write up also means 'she'].

### **SOME PRECAUTIONS:**

The ideas outlined in this write-up are not exhaustive. One learns more from one's own experience than in any other way. But we can always learn from other's experience too. The tips enumerated here mainly arise from the reading and mental analysis of a number of articles recently, perused by this writer. The supply is inexhaustible and so are potential lessons to be learnt.

- **BE SPECIFIC:**

In a study of domestic violence, a writer speaks about physical attacks on children by parents. He names the assaults as slaps on the face, on the back, pinches and kicks. Sometimes a stick has been used to deliver blows. But nowhere has the writer specified how often has the assailant been the father and in how many instances, the mother. So also, there are no clues as to whether and how often the victim was the son and how often the daughter. The non-specificity is doubly puzzling because the researcher has had every opportunity to ascertain this.

- **DON'T JUMPTO CONCLUSIONS:**

If in a particular school the pass rate has always been low and if it rises

slightly the following year, let not the researcher say the trend has reversed itself. It is premature and is certainly untenable. Any trend has to be closely watched for sometime before conclusions can be drawn.

• **MEDICAL TERMS SHOULD BE VALIDATED:**

If you are going to say that the workers in a particular industry have developed some occupational diseases, your statement should be verified and supported by a qualified physician. You should have made room for this in your methodology. Otherwise your inferences will have no legs to stand on.

• **LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED:**

If the researcher wants to write about the problems of women let him not forget that women in every ethnic group have problems of their own. Therefore, he should not generalize on the basis of his observations of any single group. Let him throw his net wide and touch all bases to carry conviction.

• **EXPLAIN YOUR METHOD IN FULL:**

A writer says she made use of rational emotive therapy (RET) to empower dowry affected women. But she has not given any details as to how she applied these techniques in her counseling sessions nor has she provided evidences of empowerment seen in the client's behavior. In the absence of validation, it is difficult to give credence to the writer's tall claims. That is why the beginner is advised to give all the details of his method and demonstrate its link to the outcome.

• **BE CONSISTENT:**

While narrating the proceedings of a conference, it is better to name the paper-readers. If your write up covers two such conferences give the lists of names (of paper readers) for both. To do so for one, and not for the second will be deemed a serious and inexplicable omission.

• **COMEDY OF ERRORS:**

Obviously the question “how many children do you have?” should not be asked of the unmarried respondents. Yet, by mistake such queries are put, with embarrassing results. In an article about the role conflicts, the following question has been put to respondents who never played the role or performed the said duty:

'Did you experience role conflict when you investigated a crime?' A large number of functionaries who never had the opportunity to conduct an investigation have been asked this, and surprisingly, answers too had been obtained! Such errors are best avoided.

- **THE URBAN - RURAL DIVIDE:**

If in your sample, there are both urban and rural respondents compare their responses to see the differences, if any. Not to do so will amount to throwing away or wasting a rare opportunity which many may consider a sign of gross efficiency.

- **UNTENABLE ASSUMPTIONS:**

In a study of women pensioners, the researcher has divided his sample into two sub-groups and on the basis of questions put to one sub-group, draws the conclusion that reduced income and loss of contact with former friends were major problems for this group, without having queried the other group. Also he concludes that the second group had no such problems. Such an inference is obviously invalid and ought to have been avoided.

- **RELIABLE METHOD**

In a study of juvenile offenders, the researcher has queried the children about parents' views of children's unsocial behavior. This is quite surprising since the researcher had ample opportunity to talk to the parents themselves. Then, why did the researcher settle for second hand information? A writer should choose the most reliable method, not the second or third best.

- **CONCLUSION:**

Anyone who aspires to be a writer is usually a researcher too, additionally. Therefore, good writing is not possible without the writer adopting a sound methodology and a no-nonsense approach in analyzing the data and in drawing inferences. Happy writing!

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