# GUIDELINES FOR WRITING AN EMPIRICAL PAPER IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCIPLINE
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## ABSTRACT

Scholarliness in the academic arena is often measured in terms of paper presentations and publications.  But writing for publication remains a challenge and enigma to many. Further, while writing for publishing, it is important for an author to give due credit to the original source and be cautious about avoiding plagiarism and copyright violation. In this context, this paper is aimed at beginners in academic writing and summates the basic premises of academic writing in an easy to understand manner.  As empirical papers are a common form of scholarly publications, this paper is devoted to writing an empirical paper and has two distinct sections namely, 'Structuring an Empirical Paper' and 'Avoiding Plagiarism and Copyright Violation'.

## INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC WRITING

Academic writing refers to a particular style of expression that researchers use to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their areas of expertise (University of Southern California, 2016). Academic Writing is a means of documenting and communicating scientific knowledge, research process and research outcomes (Monipally and Pawar, 2010). Academic Writing, depending on its genre, is targeted at not only the academic / research community (including Funding Agencies) but also the general public (Interest groups, civil society) and Government. The rationale for academic writing or publishing includes dissemination of research results,

widening one's knowledge base, realizing one's potential, 'feel good' factor and so on.

The key attributes of academic writing are clarity, conciseness or parsimony and coherence, objectivity , use of justifying arguments, use of specialist vocabulary and use of formal language. The textual matter should be presented in a clear, succinct and logical manner. Research builds on existing knowledge and strives to extend it. Hence, objective and data-based approach needs to be adopted while writing a paper. However, when the researcher wishes to adduce his/her arguments or develop a proposition, it has to be substantiated with Review of relevant Literature or other assertions. Academic writing is also known as scientific or technical writing. Hence, academic writing has to use specialist or discipline-specific vocabulary. Further, formal language and use of the third person should be employed in academic writing.

## WRITING AN EMPIRICAL PAPER FOR JOURNAL PUBLICATION

Scholarly Journals consider a wide genre of works ranging from Concept paper, Literature Review, Meta-Analytic Review of Literature, Empirical paper, Book Review to Case Study for publication. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines empirical as being "capable of being verified or disproved by observation or experiment"(http://www.merriam-webster.com/ dictionary/ empirical).

An empirical paper is one that is based on empirical data.Writing an empirical paper is akin to telling a logical, scientific story but presenting it in words where the author's research is the story line, the variables are the actors, the model / conceptual framework is the setting and the insights evolved from the analysis are the morals / message. Writing an empirical paper necessitates many inputs namely, the thought / spark / inclination, subject matter,  research gap, discipline, rigour, self-introspection and peer-review.

## STRUCTURE OF AN EMPIRICAL PAPER

The main contents of an empirical paper are as under:

- **Cover letter**: In the cover letter, it is important to give the author(s)' details including name, designation, professional affiliation, email and phone number. It is also vital to mention clearly the details of the corresponding author and to include the declaration about the originality of the paper that it has not been published elsewhere and not sent for consideration for publication elsewhere. Some journals have only e-submission provision and expect the authors to register in their website and upload the paper for review.

- **Title**: The title summarizes the main idea or ideas of one's study. A good title contains the fewest possible words needed to adequately describe the contents and/or purpose of the research paper (http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/title). Titles could have sub-titles. They need to be concise but also self-explanatory. They are useful to indicate what the paper is about and help invite readership. It would be appropriate to start with a working title before finalizing it.

- **Abstract**: Abstract is a self-contained and self-explanatory summary of a research paper or thesis, without any in-text citations. It provides a brief outline of the entire paper. It indicates what the paper is about, scope, research purpose, importance of the work, methods, and the main outcomes / findings. It is generally written after the paper is completed and in about 200-250 words. There are two types of abstracts namely, Descriptive and Informative Abstracts.  Descriptive Abstracts are given as a paragraph while Informative Abstracts are structured similar to a paper (with side headings as prescribed by the Journal).

- **Key words**: Keywords are labels used to index the article and its listing while a search is performed by fellow scholars.

Generally, five key words are furnished and could be based on the variables of the study, respondents, geography and so on

- **Body of the Paper**: The core of the paper is structured as Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methods, Results, Discussion and Conclusion.

The Introduction section has four sub-sections namely, Introduction per se that provides the background of the study, the Statement of the Problem that traces the magnitude and scope of the study, the Significance of the Study that highlights the rationale of the study and the Aims and Objectives that spell out the purpose of the study.

Literature review is a summary and synthesis of relevant, existing works. Review should relate to scholarly articles, books and other sources (for instance, dissertations and conference proceedings). It may be presented chronologically or thematically. The main purpose of Literature Review is to help identify research gaps that serve as the basis for hypothesis formulation.

In the Research Methods section, specific details about the research tools, techniques or processes used in the study are provided. Details regarding Research Design, Universe, Sampling, Tool, Reliability and Validity of the Tool, Statistics applied and so on could be mentioned in a paragraph or two.

In the Results section, the descriptive and inferential statistics are interpreted. It is important to ensure that appropriate statistical tests are applied and the numbering of tables and labeling of tables with appropriate table titles are correctly done. The author would need to abide by conventions and norms while reporting the statistical results. It is also vital that the author compares the findings with those of similar studies.

As mere interpretation of numbers (data) is not enough and as insights matter, the Discussion section is presented. In the

discussion section, the author is required to give insights based on descriptive and inferential statistics and present the implications of the results. The discussion should be the original contribution of the researcher(s).

In the Conclusion section, the author in addition to outlining the final take-aways of the article, puts forth suggestions, traces the limitations of the study and identifies future research directions.

- **References:** All the details of the in-text citations need to be presented in the reference section, in the accepted format (for instance, American Psychological Association style).

## GUIDELINES WHILE WRITING FOR JOURNAL PUBLICATION

Some of the golden rules / guidelines to be adhered to while writing for a journal publication are listed below.

- Decide on the journal in which you aspire to publish.

- Try to benchmark based on similar articles.

- At any cost, avoid plagiarism.

- Get due permission to use copyrighted materials, for instance, standardized scales.

- Overcome writer's block.

- Start with something manageable;  relish small success and launch into greater achievements.

- Beware of commercial engagements (for example, pay and publish concept).

- Cherish opportunities to do peer-review

- Ensure logical flow of text.

- Have the writing reviewed for constructive criticisms.

- Thoroughly proof-read the document.

- Follow the instructions to authors as prescribed by the Journal Publisher.

- Consult printed and online learning resources writing for publishing.

- Do not rely on Wikipedia; Citations should be authentic and retrievable.

- Use direct quotes sparingly, rather paraphrase. Quotations of more than 45 words have to be indented from the text and presented in single line spacing.

- Use the right referencing style (example, APA format); Avoid Footnotes

- Adhere to the word count norms for the article as prescribed by the Journal Publisher.

## WRITERS BEWARE - PLAGIARISM AND COPYRIGHT VIOLATION

In the context of academic writing, quoting references in appropriate places, giving credit to the original source and using the copyrighted materials with due permission from the copyright holders are very important. Plagiarism and copyright violations are two common issues faced by Journal Editors while considering an article for review.

According to Ridley (2010), the use of same or similar words from the original text even if the source author is acknowledged amounts to plagiarism. There are many forms of plagiarism. As per the survey of Plagiarism Spectrum (2012), plagiarism includes (i) submitting another's work, word-for-word, as one's own, (ii) combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages without citation, (iii) containing significant portions of text from a single source without alterations, (iv) mixing up copied material from multiple sources, (v) changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source, (vi) citing non-existent or inaccurate information about sources, (vii)

assembling paraphrases from multiple sources, (viii) paper being a mere aggregation of proper citation of sources without any original work, (ix) borrowing generously from the writer's previous work without citation and (x) including proper citation, but relying   too closely on the text's original wording and/or structure. According to Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d), Copyright is "the exclusive legally secured right to reproduce, publish and sell the matter and form of a literary, musical, dramatic or artistic work". Copyright violation refers to infringement of the rights of the original copyright holder.

## MEASURES TO AVOID THE RISK OF PLAGIARISM

In the computer and internet age, the possibilities for plagiarism are plenty and so also the mechanisms to find them. So it is pertinent to know the methods to avoid plagiarism. In the process of academic writing, there are many ways to avoid plagiarism. In general, the three methods that can be adopted to avoid plagiarism include (i)  Citation, (ii)  Quotation Marks and (iii) Paraphrasing.

### (i)      Citation

Citation includes both in-text citation and referencing and both are very important  while writing. Whatever source is mentioned in the  in-text should have been mentioned in the reference and vice-versa. There are different methods of citations like American Psychological Association's format, Modern Language Association's style, Chicago style and so on. The author should keep thorough track of the references made and approximately provide the in-text citation and end-text references.

### (ii)     Quotation Marks

Direct quotes need to be used sparingly. They may be used when furnishing definitions or when the intention of the author is not to miss out the original essence. There are two ways to avoid plagiarism  use of short quotes and use of long quotes. Short quotes are used to quote small portions of the original text, verbatim. In such instances, the

author has to reproduce the same words within double quotes and cite the source. Long quotes on the other hand have to be presented in a distinct manner,  they have to be shown separately from the main text by one-tab indent from the left margin with the citation of the source. But in both the cases, the words should be used verbatim.

### (iii)	Paraphrasing

When any other text or idea is used in our writing with due acknowledgement to the source, the ideas could be paraphrased i.e., presented in the own words of the author (with due acknowledgement to the source).

### MEASURES TO AVOID COPYRIGHT VIOLATION

Copyright holder may be an author, Publisher, CD-Publisher, Internet Publisher and so on. The copyright holder has the right both to prevent others to copy the work and to claim that the work has been copied. Any person, who does any one or all of the following - reproducing, issuing copies, making translation or adaptation without the permission of the owner of the work is infringing or violating copyright. The best way to avoid copyright violation is to obtain permission from the copyright owner for using the work. Another possibility is to use the "Fair Use" clause. The  "Fair use" clause is not considered as infringement in the Copyright Act, 1957. The "Fair Use" clause permits the use of copyrighted work for select purposes including (a) the purpose of academic research, review, critical study of a work, (b) the purpose of reporting in a newspaper/ magazine and (c) the purpose of reproducing for Judiciary (Wadehra, 21999). In the era of open source,the copyright owner could release the copyrighted material in favour of Creative Commons or by other means for open source use.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Writing is both an art and science and writing for journal publication is no exception. It is urged that any beginner should attempt original writing to master it in the long run. It is believed that this article would

have served to excite a beginner to write and ignite the passion for writing among novices taking due precautions to avoid plagiarism and copyright violations.

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