HOW TO AVOID REJECTION OF RESEARCH PAPER BY JOURNALS

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Abstract

Every day, many individuals approach various journals to get their work published. Publishing one’s scientific work in a renowned journal provides authenticity and gives credit to the author. Some get accepted at the first go, many require multiple iterations, while a lot many face rejections. Rejection of research papers is a most common process in these days. Authors gather input from various collaborators, colleagues, fellow authors, and peer reviewers. Scientific research and subsequent publishing is an iterative process. First manuscripts are designed and written, then they are revised and edited several times. In a perfect world, this carefully designed product would be immediately ready to publish. Yet, evidence suggests that 21% of papers are rejected without review, at first glance, and approximately 40% of papers are rejected after peer review.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the common reasons why academic papers are rejected by journal editor. Manuscript rejection is a hurting and a disappointing experience especially when it is repeated several times. Colleges and universities always evaluate and promote the academic staff based on their number of publications. Manuscript rejection represents a major barrier for junior staff to get promoted and develop their carrier especially that the rates of manuscripts’ rejection in the high impact journals reach as much as 90%. An author who target publication in high prestigious journals may spend many years to publish just small parts of his research findings. This had lead many of the researchers and academic staff particularly in developing countries to publish their studies in local and low ranked journals. Several studies attempted to address the reasons of manuscript rejection by Science journals. Studying this issue or writing about it would help beginners who seek publishing their data but face difficulties solve the problems of rejection and getting their work published in a reasonable time frame. Also, appreciating that manuscript rejection is a common occurrence would help relieving the symptoms of frustration and reduce feelings of disappointment. Common reasons included lack of the importance and relevance of the subject matter; lack of consistency between study design, results, and conclusions; lack of originality; and inappropriate, questionable or flawed methodology. In many situations different journals send the same manuscript to the same reviewers and unless a significant change in the manuscript has been made, reviewers would recommend “rejection” again. This explains partially the experiences of frequent rejections of a particular
manuscript when an author keeps resubmitting it to several journals as it was written firstly and without making any effort to modify it.

Objectives:

- The main objective of this paper is to study the reasons of rejection of research paper.
- To study the overall criteria of research paper acceptance.
- To study the problem’s of research.

Methodology:

For this paper data is mainly taken from secondary sources such as books, journals, newspaper and internet. The primary data is from the viewpoints of senior professor of the universities, researchers of institutes and private organizations.

WHY REJECTION?

There are many reasons why a paper may not be accepted, data plagiarism is just one of the common concerns. There are no shortcuts to success. To prepare a noteworthy paper one must put in a lot of effort initially behind the work itself and then behind the paper writing process. As a manuscript is getting rejected several times data becomes out-of-date. This provides another reason to reviewers and editors for rejection. Rejection because the data is getting out-of-date occurs in researches related to some fields such as epidemiology and clinical works and those studies which are survey based but may not be seen in laboratory-based researches as such data can be published at any time as long as there is an interest in the findings. However, there is some evidence that not all rejected manuscripts are of a poor quality. According to Woolley & Barron, at least 50% of rejected manuscripts are published within 2 years after being rejected although this period may reach up to 5 years. According to Calcagno and associates, published papers that have a history of prior rejection are cited more than those which do not have such history. This supports the notion that many rejected papers were actually good or at least having potentiality to become so. Then, why some good papers are getting rejected? Other factors beyond those identified by previous studies might be playing role in the rejection of the good work. The present paper discusses various aspects related to the rejection of good quality manuscripts and describes efforts been made by some Science and social studies journals to reduce the loss in the scientifically sound works due to rejection.

There are multiple criteria checked by individual journals, a few of which have been discussed below.

1. **Journal scope does not include the concerned work.**

   It is essential to approach a journal which publishes your line of work. For example, if you have worked on an antibiotic characterization and have approached an Ecology based journal, the chances are high that it gets rejected at the first screening itself. It is very important that the subject line of your work matches the ideology of the journal.
2. **Insufficient problem statement.**

Once you have chosen the appropriate journal, they will check whether you have chosen a strong problem statement. For example, if you have established a new protein, it is essential for you to provide the structure, characteristics, interaction data, and signaling junctions. Again, rejections may happen, if you have just chosen to provide the name of the protein and have not given any details on what role it has to play in cell signaling or what function it may have in the body. These are weak literature with not much depth in them.

The objective of your research must be clearly identifiable in the abstract itself and must be clearly concluded in your work. Partially done experiments with no conclusive proof may not be accepted.

3. **Data insufficiency.**

Any experiments listed must be reproducible and must be proved by multiple trials. The experiments which have been concluded by more than one technique offering the same result will have more credibility. It is critical for you to identify how much data you want to publish in your work. You can provide details under a separate header of Methods or Experiments in your article. Your research and its conclusion must be backed with scientific experiments and cannot be concluded based on hypothesis or rough estimations. In case of statistical analysis have been done, they must be validated to the most appropriate values using statistical techniques like chi-square etc. Ensure you use the correct statistical method for analysis and that the method is listed in details. Never draw conclusions based on arbitrary or variable data. Inconsistency in your work and assumption can lead to rejection.

4. **Clarity of images and optimized techniques**

If you provide a western blot, make sure the wells, bands are clearly visible. Never edit any real-time image taken as that can be considered plagiarism. If the image has a lot of dirt or fragments or huge smears visible, it may indicate that your method had a lot of manual errors or your sample used during the process was not pure and stable.

Make sure you have well optimized your instruments before you begin your work and all these optimizations and controls used must be clearly listed in your methodology.

5. **Use of obsolete methods**

With modern day technologies advancing, more accurate and error-free techniques are developed. Conducting research using them is far more beneficial as a criterion for article acceptance. In some cases, if there are far better and accurate techniques available, a journal may reject your research as an outdated technique.
6. **Writing ability**

If you have chosen a very complicated aim and are not able to convey the steps in a simplified legible manner, it may lead to rejection of your work. You may have taken time to understand the problem statement, decipher it and analyze it, but your presentation must be simple for helping others understand. Since maximum journals accept the English language for their content, proofread your manuscript to avoid confusion due to grammatical errors. Always remember the journal targets a broad range audience; hence frame your work accordingly.

7. **Data is biased**

Journal reviewers and editors can identify if your results or assumptions seem manipulated or forcefully derived. Hence, do not include any data bias. Have sufficient data to establish and support each statement that you claim in the paper. In case you obtain any data contradicting your work, try to provide the reasons or possibilities for the same. In case there are too many contradictions, reconsider your methodology or optimize your techniques better. Where sampling is involved, make sure that there are sufficient test samples and a large basket of data. If the data size is small, there is a chance of bias in the results and that often leads to rejections.

8. **Data mismatch or defective tabulation**

If your experimental data, images, tabulations, and graphs do not tally with one another or with the theory you support, then there is a high chance your work will not be accepted. It is crucial to cross check each of these and make sure the data is easy to understand and deduce. This will help the reviewer undergo fewer iterations before publishing your work. Do not edit the data that does not support your theory. This is considered tampering and plagiarism.

9. **Conclusion stated cannot be drawn or cannot be generalized**

After all the effort of having proper experimentation and collecting sufficient data, if your conclusion speaks about something distantly related, the work will not be accepted. Conclusions can be generalized only when there is sufficient sampling done. If there is a small amount of sample, then there is a chance that the same results may not be applicable at a larger scale. So, carefully scrutinize your work and take sufficient expert opinions before submitting the same for publishing. Any arguments made must be logically driven and must remain valid at least for the next 5 years. Data that can change instantaneously or cannot be reproduced must not be used or submitted and neither should be relied upon for research.

10. **Research claim is incomplete**

The work that has been done shows multiple observations and has a lot of results, but may not be recognized as a full study. The work may be considered too preliminary and the experiments may not have a high level of confidence. If the work does not add any significant value to the existing literature or is an average work that cannot be used any further, it may not qualify as a complete
study. Just as a researcher searched for a high impact journal, the researchers work must also add impact to the journal. Poor conceptualization leads to rejection.

11. Repeated or Not an original study
Bringing out the novelty is important. Research does not mean modifying the contents or beautifying what has already been stated before, it means adding more to an existing claim, either in support or in contradiction. The reviewer may reject your work if similar proceedings are found submitted or quoted in other journals. Often these papers are seen to have contents that are a small extension of work from another paper, possibly the author’s own. Journals accept review papers as well, in which case current findings must be present or accounted for in the article. In case the literature is solicited from any author, the cover letter must clearly state the details and purpose.

12. Research is unethical or dangerous to society
If the work that has been done, or the experimental systems or procedures used are unethical, legal action may be initiated along with rejection. While executing any work, make sure everything aligns as per the ethical standards of the society and accreditation boards. If the research quality standards do not meet the norms of scientific society and the laws governing us, the research may be deemed dangerous and the member may be barred.

13. Reference to special cases or examples
If the work depends upon claims made only for special cases or samples and not on ones that are generalized, then such work may not be accepted by a journal. The published work must be applicable to all scenarios. In other cases if it refers to special cases, it must be explicitly mentioned that the aim of the work is applicable only to certain scenarios and the upper limit must be clearly mentioned.

14. Improper Citations
It may seem strange but even reusing your own work from previous labs or degrees can be committing self-plagiarism. It is very important to cite the articles you have referred or your work may be rejected on copyright claims. Be honest with your submission as copyright and plagiarism are offenses that can be criminally charged!! Journals have criteria where only 10-20% of your citations may be from your or your co-author’s work. The rest must necessarily be from external authors. In case this ratio is not maintained, the work may not be considered as free from bias and may be rejected. While providing citations for fellow authors, make sure to use recent literature. Outdated literature may support wrong conclusions or may have a lot of contradictory literature’s. Try not to exclude studies that are negating your hypothesis, you may choose to discuss them with proof, to add more authenticity and conviction to your work. Insufficient citations may also be a cause for rejection.
15. Manuscript will have limited interest to international audience

If your work does not attract viewers, the journal may not encourage it further. A manuscript must have a catchy aim and a novel technique or a topic of mass interest. That will attract viewers and citations and will be beneficial to both the author and the publisher. Again, if the audience is limited to a particular region within a country, that too may not be entertained further.

16. Improper Citation of reference

If a journal mentions certain citation format then the researcher need to follow the same as most of the rejections are done because of such reasons. For Eg; if the journal is asking for APA format and the researcher follows ASA format then rejection may occur in reputed and peered journal.

JOURNAL’S OVERALL CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTANCE

Each journal may have stated their acceptability criteria before hand. It should be carefully looked through to avoid rejections. Most common criteria’s are –

- The study must present the results of the primary scientific research.
- Results that have been reported must not be published elsewhere.
- Experiments, statistics, and other analyses must be performed to a high technical standard and should be described in sufficient detail.
- Conclusions should be presented in an appropriate fashion and must be supported by the data.
- The article should be presented in an intelligible fashion and must be written in standard English.
- The research should meet all applicable standards for the ethics of experimentation as well as research integrity.
- The article must adhere to appropriate reporting guidelines as well as community standards for data availability.

In case your work has been explicitly rejected without any iterations, there is a high chance that even modifications may not lead to acceptance. This suggests that the reviewers may not support your line of work or the journal scope may be different. In such cases, do not be disheartened, it is always good to try looking for other journals to publish your work. Every researchers data, though and concept is valuable no matter how simple it is. It must be published. Use the rejections as a learning to better your literary work, refine your approach and stay focused till you succeed.

CONCLUSION

There are many reasons that journals reject manuscripts for publication, some due to the quality of the research or manuscript, and some due to completely avoidable reasons like mismatch with the journal. Further, it is not rare for journals to reject even high-quality manuscripts simply because of space constraints or other issues. The reasons given above are some of the most common reasons for rejection, but they are not the only ones. Other reasons include salami publications, non-conformance to ethics policies, and plagiarism.
REFERENCES:


