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Editorial

Writing a Research Article: Foundational Strategies for Emerging Scholars

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Abstract

The journey of article publication is a rigorous academic undertaking that every academician and researcher aspires for and attempts. However, only a few of them can accomplish it to an ideal standard. The process consists of a series of interconnected steps from preparation to publication that begins with writing the initial draft as the primary step. Against this backdrop, this editorial illustrates effective academic strategies to help early-career authors meet the publication standards for an article. It reflects the editors' cumulative empirical engagements across multiple scholarly roles of writing and publication, such as authorship, peer review, and editorial practices within diverse academic journals. Moreover, it sheds light on what truly happens behind the scenes of journal article publication. By blending our lived experiences and relevant, authentic literature, this editorial illustrates how early-career researchers can navigate the complexities of scholarly writing. It provides authorial guidelines to articulate local issues for national and international academic discourse through research undertakings, writing, and publication. It also discusses the relevant insightful ideas and practical steps to be acquired to transform the writing process into a final product (published article) within the publication standard. Ultimately, this editorial contributes to novice researchers in writing a publishable article in a peer-reviewed journal.

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Keywords: Early career researcher, Hourglass, IMRD, Writing for publication, Writing strategies

Introduction

Publishing a research article is essential for the advancement of knowledge and growth of an academic and professional career. It contributes to the body of literature in the respective field and establishes a researcher's credibility. It helps to build a professional reputation for university faculties within their field. Besides the personal recognition, societal and institutional advancement is also achieved through published articles (Kotz et al., 2013). Publishing a scientific or research article establishes collaborations among the scientific communities. Also, it supports the researchers in advancing their professional careers and helps them obtain research funds (Medina-Franco & López-López, 2022). Moreover, it is not only mandatory for scientists and specialists to publish their research works to hold academic positions, but also desirable even for graduate and undergraduate-level students (Jirge, 2017). Therefore, publishing research articles is crucial for academics, specialists, and students for advancement of their personal careers and affiliated academic institutions (Liumbruno et al., 2013). Such publications also contribute to societal progress through valid scientific knowledge. In the case of universities, writing and publishing research articles in a reputable, ranked journal enhances institutional recognition in international university rankings. Such practices also visualize authors among global scientists and verbalize local academic contexts in the international arena by aligning with global standards of higher education. Publishing standard research papers strengthens academic credibility and supports evidence-based teaching practices.

Despite these academic imperatives, the old maxim ‘publish or perish’ remains valid even today (Davies & Felappi, 2017; Moskovkin, 2025). However, publishing is a mere survival in academia; succeeding demands that readers understand it and use it in their works (Schimel, 2012). No one succeeds by writing alone; it is achieved only by effective and collaborative writing. For effective writing, it is essential to read and rehearse writing repeatedly. Engaging in collaborative writing practice with experienced colleagues and peers is equally significant to make the manuscript academically sound and publishable in reputed indexed journals. Such collaboration supports the novice author with valuable guidance to maintain the quality of the manuscript and to meet the publication standards. Many young researchers find themselves under pressure to produce a research article without institutional support or mentorship. They wonder how to draft a manuscript, retain the structure, and select an appropriate journal for submission. Such compound challenges can lead them towards anxiety in writing and publishing research articles (Ecarnot et al., 2015). The developing academic contexts, such as Nepal, have paid less institutional attention to research writing and publication. As we observed, Nepali higher education institutions are indifferent to motivating their faculty members in research and publication.

Moreover, many university faculties perceive research writing and publication as secondary or non-obligatory tasks compared to teaching responsibilities. The research and publication culture has not flourished within the university norms in our context. Against this backdrop, this editorial paper presents a concise step-by-step outline for writing a research article for a peer-reviewed journal. In this paper, the authors have reflected on their experiences and position of writing, publishing, editing, and reviewing articles for nationally and internationally ranked journals. This paper employs subjective interpretation and authorial experiences of preparing and finalizing a research article. For this, it has used authentic literature to explore the writing strategies instead of employing the objective methodological rigor of collecting primary data. In this regard, this paper aims to suggest the academic strategies for the emerging scholars, early career authors, and university faculties to write a publishable manuscript in peer-reviewed journals, highlighting its essential components within each stage.

Conceptual Overview of Drafting a Research Article

A well-prepared research article should have a logical structure and coherent presentation. They are essential to ensure the purpose, relevance, and implications of the research article. A cohesive structure of the manuscript communicates the study effectively to readers. Generally, a scientific article should have a title, authorship, abstract, and keywords in the preliminary part. In its body part, the IMRD structure—Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion is a well-accepted standardized format of many journals. Figure 1 presents the IMRD format of journals, which enhances the readability and logical flow of the manuscript and makes the article scientific.

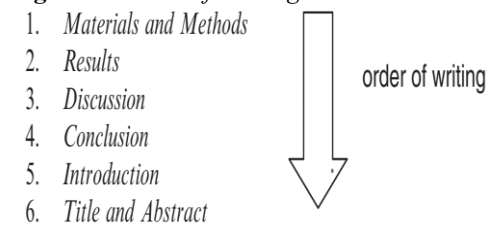
Figure 1: *IMRD Structure of Published Article*

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current state of knowledge with references • Knowledge gaps • Primary and secondary objectives
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection criteria for study population • What has been done and how: Tests, interventions, techniques • Primary and secondary endpoints • Ethical considerations • Dedicated paragraph for statistical analysis
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe results: Don't interpret • Use tables and figures and illustrations • Every method described should have a dedicated result
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recapitulate main findings • Compare findings with those in literature • Describe how results contribute to knowledge and advancement • Summarize strengths and limitations of the study

Source: [Shankar and Arun \(2022, p. S293\)](#)

As indicated in Figure 1, the IMRD structure is widespread and the foundation of an effective scientific paper for systematic communication nowadays ([Jirge, 2017](#); [Sollaci & Pereira, 2004](#)). Additionally, the structure in Figure 1 may incorporate implications or contributions of the study, conclusion, and the limitations separately or at the end of the discussion section. The research article, finally, incorporates a list of references and some other optional sections, such as appendices, acknowledgements, funding, conflicts of interest, authors' contributions, authors(s)' biographies, etc. However, the writing does not follow a linear order, but rather from a middle way out. Figure 2 illustrates the practical order while writing a research article.

Figure 2: *Order of Writing Research Articles*



Source: [Katz \(2009, p. 79\)](#)

Figure 2 suggests the recommended order of writing a research article. Article writing practically begins with materials and methods, then proceeds to results, followed by discussion and conclusion. Then, only the researchers write a full-fledged introduction. Ultimately, researchers finalize the title and abstract that briefly capture the essence of the entire work.

Significant elements as they appear in the published article are briefly discussed below:

Title: The title reveals the essence of the entire manuscript. It is known as the entrance of the research paper; readers make the decision to read the whole paper or not after reading the title within seconds. The title should be specific, clear, and concise. As indicated by Thomson's Web of Science, 27% nature papers are uncited after five years because they are unread and undiscovered by search

engines due to the issue of title. Therefore, the title should be concise, specific, and reflective of the study's main contribution, including the searchable terms. The search engine can easily access the searchable terms used in the title (Scholz, 2022), which have high visibility and accessibility. Such searchable terms are related to the general research process, the area of research, and the conceptual and analytical process of research. The effective titles often include three key elements: a general term, an intermediate term, and a specific term. A general term indicates the field of the study; an intermediate term describes the focus area or condition of the study, and a specific term denotes the method, intervention, or result of the study (Gastel & Day, 2022). All sorts of abbreviations should be avoided in the title unless they are widely recognized (Sivapathasundharam, 2010). However, many journals also require a shortened running title to enhance readability and indexing convenience.

Abstract and Keywords: The abstract serves as a concise summary of the entire study, which typically captures key backgrounds, methods, results, and conclusions with an impact statement (Yang, 1995). It stands alone without references, giving a first impression to the editors, reviewers, and readers. Depending on the journal's format, abstracts may be structured or unstructured. Most journals restrict abstracts to around 250 words (American Psychological Association, 2023; Cals & Kotz, 2013). The abstract's format, language model, and other details are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: *Sample of Abstracts*

<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>The purpose of this study was to explore the perception and practices of Nepali English Teachers (NETs) on teaching literature for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Surkhet district of Nepal. A mixed-method research approach with an embedded explanatory sequential design was used in the study. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data pertinent to the study. Data were analyzed statistically and thematically. The results of the study showed that NETs perceived the pedagogical value of using literature in English Language Teaching (ELT) in EFL contexts, as it fosters linguistic and cultural competencies of students, and enhances their active classroom participation, despite challenges like unfamiliar vocabulary, linguistic complexity, and lack of students' reading habits. This study suggests innovative strategies in EFL teaching and curriculum development by emphasizing the positive perceptions of NETs toward integrating literature in language teaching courses.</p> <p>IMPACT STATEMENT</p> <p>It highlights the relevance of teaching English literature in the EFL context to enhance students' linguistic and intercultural competence, which offers insights to educators, curriculum developers, and researchers into literature integration in language teaching.</p>	<p>Abstract</p> <p>This article examines the impact of Reader Response Approach (RRA) on learners' autonomy in interpreting literary texts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. The research involved graduate-level students and teachers from two public universities of Nepal, through Participatory Action Research (PAR). Data were gathered from two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), twelve classroom observations, and two Key Informant Interviews (KIs), involving a total of 54 participants. The analysis, based on the principles of socio-constructivism, revealed that RRA-based classes provided students with greater freedom and ample opportunities to engage in discussions on literary texts, connecting them to their personal beliefs and values by fostering their active participation.</p>
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Source: Bist and Kandel (2025)

Bist and Kandel (2024)

Below the abstract, keywords are typically listed, which are significant in a research article for the discoverability of the article through search engines and indexing databases. As the requirement of journals, four to ten precise words or phrases are listed as keywords, representing the study's content, and consistent with the title.

Introduction: The introduction sets the required background of the research, supported by relevant references, which helps readers understand the study's context and rationale. Moreover, a good introduction begins with establishing a territory by claiming centrality and making topic generalizations. It, then, establishes a niche through counter-claiming, indicating a gap, question-raising, and continuing a tradition (Çandarlı, 2012). It also sets the way of occupying the niche by outlining present research, announcing principal findings and indicating structure. Introduction is the next part, besides the abstract, that readers read first to receive your impression as a researcher and writer. It unifies the paper by justifying the title, background and researcher motivation, gap in literature, research problems, questions, hypothesis, objectives, explicit social contribution, research plan and rationale, and significant results (Gray, 2018). The technical term should be written in its full form for the first time, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Then such an abbreviated form should be used consistently in the entire research work. The structure of the introduction often follows an hourglass approach, beginning with a broad overview of the topic or issue, then narrowing down to

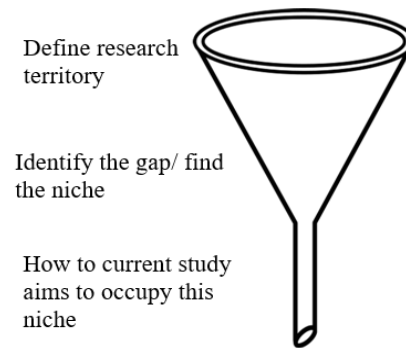
highlight existing knowledge, research gaps, and areas of uncertainty. It concludes by stating the specific aim or objective of the study, emphasizing its significance and contribution to the field (Gastel & Day, 2022; Jirge, 2017). In other words, the introduction section should include 2 to 3 paragraphs about the background, summarizing existing evidence and knowledge gaps, purpose of the study, and hypothesis to convince readers that the study is significant and important (Balch et al., 2018; Englander, 2014). The introduction may also include an in-built literature review, or it may stand alone separately after the introduction. A literature review is an overview of the earlier studies related to the topic, often arranged into themes and subthemes (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013).

Following the hourglass, the introduction starts broadly by defining the research territory and identifying the gap of the topic, then narrows down to the specific research questions or objectives as illustrated in Figure 4.

Methods: Method refers to the systematic techniques used to collect, analyze, and interpret data in a study. It outlines the way of conducting research and justifies the selected techniques and methods to answer the research question or test the hypothesis. The methods of the manuscript often determine whether a paper is accepted or rejected. Therefore, it must be clear and comprehensive, stating what, why, and how methods are used in the study (Shankar & Arun, 2022). This section forms a ‘foundation of a paper’ because the results of the study are dependent on the methods and procedures (Katz, 2009). It includes study design, participants, variables, data collection, intervention or procedure, sample size calculation, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Every result in the manuscript should be linked to a corresponding method, and the section is usually written in the past tense.

Results: The results section of a manuscript presents the findings of the study, providing a detailed account of the collected data without any interpretation or analysis. It gives answer to the reader what the research found. Commonly, results are referred to as findings in qualitative research since they are presented in words or quotations from participants. However, the author should follow the target journal format. Results or findings should be presented in a clear, structured, and objective manner using bar, histogram, pie, line, scatter, flow charts, photographs, thematic maps, codebooks, quotations, word clouds, etc. (Ammon, 2022). Particularly, this section includes “words (which tell the story), tables (that depict the evidence), illustrations (highlighting important findings), and statistics (that support the statements)” (Shankar & Arun, 2022, p. S295). The results should be presented clearly and concisely, using a suitable number of words to maintain precision and avoid verbosity (Ecarnot et al., 2015). Each result must correspond directly to a methodology of the study. It has to maintain consistency in writing in logical structure, ensure coherence and clarity of the result. The use of subheadings should also be consistent with those in the objectives, research questions, and methods sections. Typically, the past tense is used in results writing without using in-text citations. However, it differs depending on the structure and convention of the journals.

Figure 4: *The Funnel Analogy for Introduction*



INTRODUCTION

Source: Shankar and Arun (2022, p. S293)

Discussion: The discussion section begins with the major findings of the study, followed by an illustrative comparison of the findings or results with the relevant literature, implications, limitations, and conclusion of the study (Gray, 2019). By now, the article manuscript has already answered questions: “Why was the study done?” in the introduction section, “How was it done?” in methods, and “What were the findings?” in the results section. The discussion, then, addresses the final question “So what?” (Shankar & Arun, 2022). The discussion section interprets and contextualizes the results with the broader body of literature on the subject, elaborating the similarities and differences. It also highlights the strengths and limitations of findings. Moreover, this section requires clear and balanced writing to effectively share the significance of the results (Dunton, 2021) – why it happened the way it happened. The structure of the discussion section with agreed components and citations (Dunton, 2021; Ecartot et al., 2015; Gray, 2019) is presented in Figure 5. However, authors should not present any new results in this section or repeat the same data already presented in the results section.

Figure 5: Structure of Discussion Section

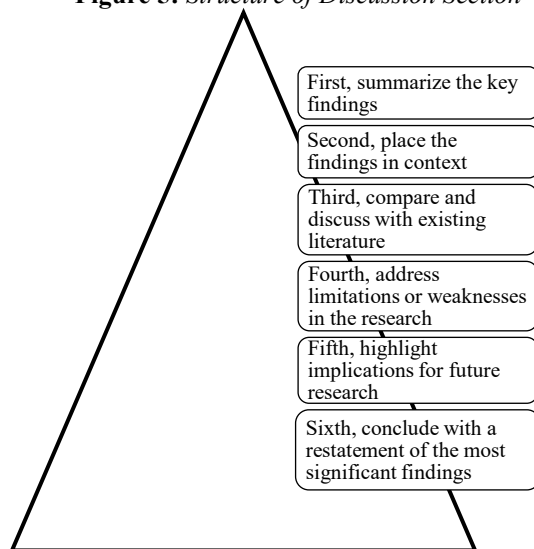
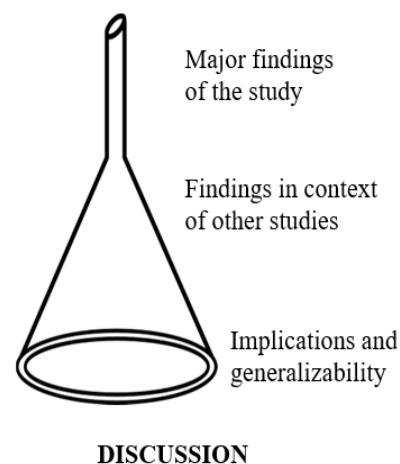


Figure 6: The Funnel Analogy for Discussion



Source: Shankar and Arun (2022, p. S293)

As indicated in Figure 5, the discussion of the article manuscript includes key findings, contextualization of the findings, comparison with the previous results, limitations, and recommendations for future research and restatement. Connecting the hourglass of introduction, the discussion begins by summarizing the key findings narrowly related to that question, then broadens the context by comparing these findings with existing literature and discussing broader implications. This creates a cohesive flow from the broad introduction to detailed findings and back to the wider context, as given in Figure 6.

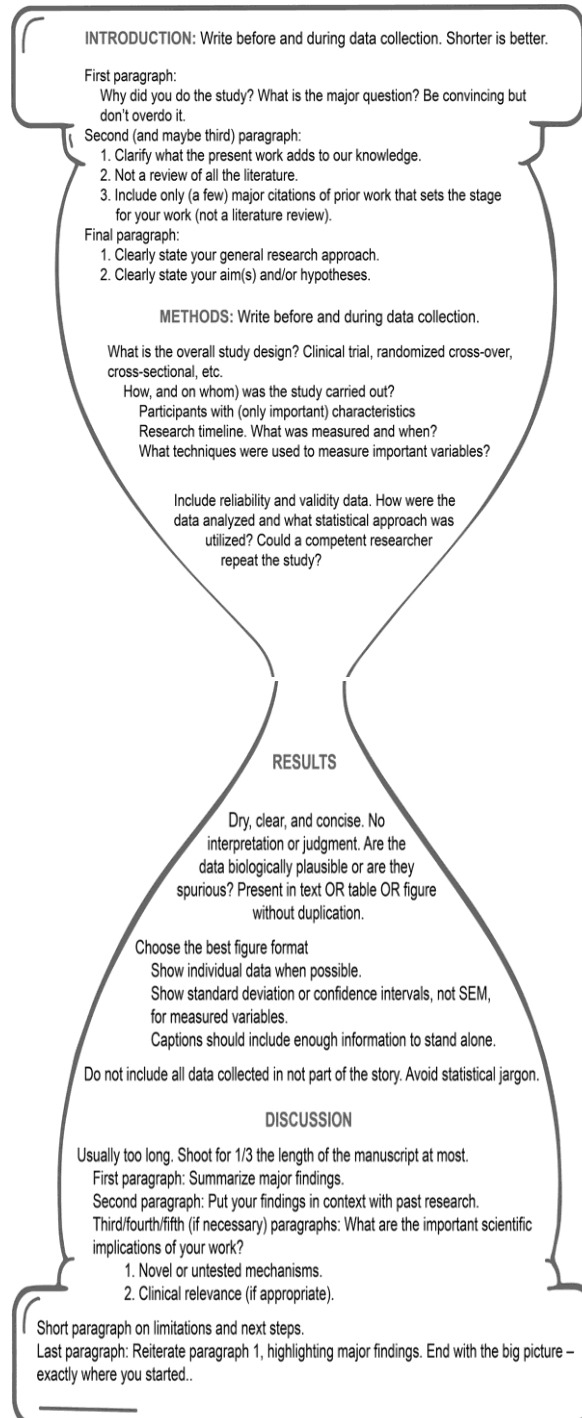
Conclusion: The conclusion of a manuscript should briefly wrap up the study by first restating the research problem or objective freshly. It reminds the reader with a restatement of the main finding, discussion, and its implications without stating a mere summary of the study. The conclusion section gives directions for future research, actions to take, policy interventions, or other implications of the study's findings. It also states the limitations of the study. Finally, the conclusion ends with a strong, clear final statement on the study's relevance and study's value and its place in the larger scholarly conversation.

Conclusion

As highlighted in Figure 7, the scientific research article is structured in its essential components, such as introduction, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion. Each part functions within the IMRD framework. In a research article, an effective title enhances visibility, and the abstract provides a concise first impression, including all key components of the article. The introduction sets the intellectual foundation by identifying gaps and establishing the study's relevance. Likewise, the methods section offers transparency and rigor; the results present findings with clarity; and the discussion interprets those findings in light of existing literature, implications, and limitations. The authors conclude the manuscripts by reaffirming the study's significance and its contribution to further inquiry.

On the top of that, writing a manuscript is a recursive process and rarely follows the linear order of the final manuscript. For producing a publishable manuscript, reading and revising, along with collaborating with experienced colleagues, are essential. Such collaboration provides novice researchers with mentorship and quality assurance necessary for meeting journal standards. Research writing is both a skill and a scholarly responsibility. Researchers should know about the structure, purpose, and flow of each manuscript section, then, they can communicate their work effectively and ethically through writing. Effective research writing practices can contribute to building a more vibrant academic environment and the growth of scientific knowledge in academic institutions.

Figure 7: *Hourglass Structure of Scientific Article*



Source: [Kenney \(2025, p. 719\)](#)

About Editors

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