

Academic Publishing Challenges among PhD Students of English at Naama University

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Abstract :

The process of publishing manuscripts in academic journals is perceived as a vital component of scholarly productivity. Publishing in reputable international academic journals is considered as indispensable for researchers, as it enables them to share their research among international scholarly communities and thus contribute to the elevation of their institutions' ranking. However, many researchers, particularly doctoral students, encounter numerous challenges and barriers in formulating papers for publication. The current study aims to explore the main factors affecting the publication output of doctoral students of English at Naama university. Data were collected using an online questionnaire administered to 20 doctoral students and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study reveal that challenges and obstacles associated with academic publishing are multifaceted involving deficiencies in academic writing skills, time constraints, limited supervision support, linguistic difficulties, the peer review process, and psychological barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive support from the part of institutions and universities.

Keywords: linguistic difficulties, peer review, psychological factors, publishing, writing skills



1.Introduction:

In higher education, one of the major milestones in the scholarly journey of doctoral students is writing for publication. For PhD students, editing articles is beneficial for many reasons, it allows them to diffuse original researches to a large academic community, demonstrate their scholarly competence within their field, and participate successfully in any discourse in a given discipline. Furthermore, the process of writing enables students to develop their analytical and critical thinking skills, discuss results correctly, and build appropriate, and meaningful literature.

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Within the context of academic research, doctoral students face a growing pressure to publish due to the higher impact of research on university ranking and scholarly competitiveness. Students productivity can be measured by the ability to write and publish in peer-reviewed journals and conferences papers or proceedings.

Publishing papers strengthens students' visibility and presence within their specific fields, and provides them with opportunities to collaborate with other researchers. In fact, the act of writing for publication requires ideas refinement, and the ability to communicate successfully to different readers.

In spite of its significance, the process of producing valuable papers for publication is loaded with issues and obstacles. Doctoral researchers have to be aware of the complexities of formulating manuscripts, selecting suitable journals, and reviewing process.

2.Literature Review

Within doctoral research programs, publishing articles in reputable academic journals is an essential requirement for many doctoral students. Publication serves as a key strategy for enhancing scientific productivity because it requires researchers to follow rigorous academic journal guidelines and standards that evaluate the significance, validity, and accuracy of research findings. Moreover, the publication process enables researchers to disseminate their work to a broader scholarly community and contribute to the advancement of knowledge within their respective fields (Bradley, 2009, pp. 331-342); (Shin, 2018).

Several studies have examined doctoral students' experiences with academic publishing and have provided valuable insights into the factors that influence publication success. A mixed-methods study investigated the publication practices of doctoral students by combining statistical analyses of the publication process with qualitative data derived from students' and reviewers' perceptions and experiences. The findings indicated that publishing manuscripts during doctoral studies enhanced students' academic writing skills and increased their understanding of publication procedures in reputable journals (Lindqvist, 2018, pp. 1395-1408).

In the same vein, another study analyzed students' publication experiences in an African setting, where the results the study revealed that publication supports the educational sector and students' experiences in publishing (Asante, 2021, pp. 87-107). Another mixed-methods investigation scrutinized medical students' shift from thesis writing to journal publication and revealed that supervision and continuous engagement with the publication procedure are essential factors for effective manuscript acceptance (Björklund, Ramin Massoumi, & Bodil Ohlsson , 2024)

2-1. Techniques for Editing a Scientific Article

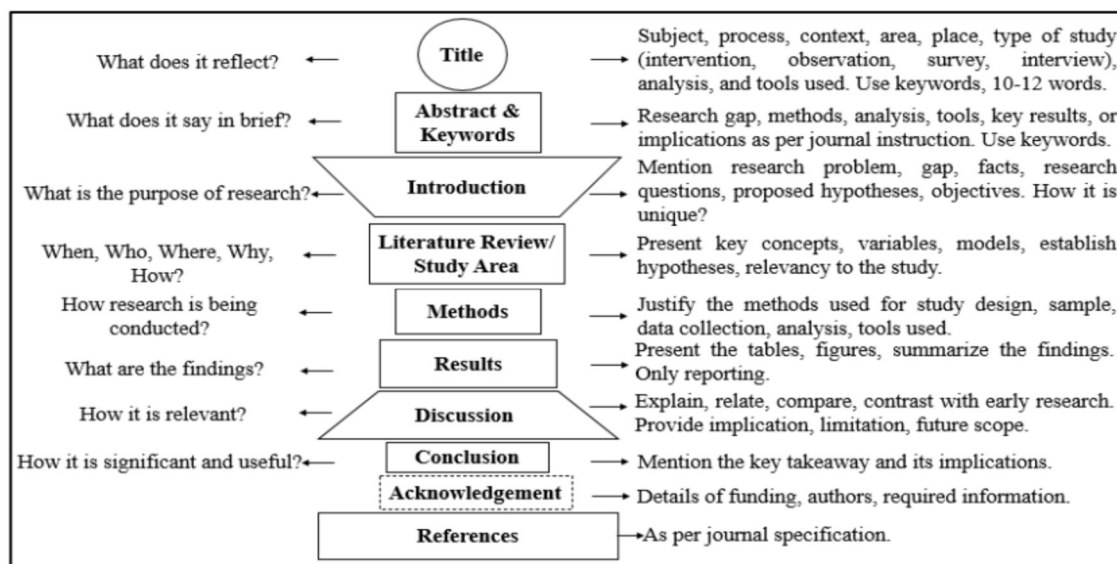
Academic journals exhibit specific characteristics for their articles, following these standards maybe difficult to doctoral students which affects their works acceptance. Thus, students should understand the techniques and strategies of formulating an article accepted in academic journals.

A research article must clearly express its purpose, methods, and results using precise, simple, and well-structured sentences. It should also follow a well-organized format that clearly presents the study, along with its data and findings. Selecting a suitable topic is the first step, and it should address a significant issue within the relevant field of study. The title should be brief, informative, and directly related to the subject, as it reflects the core idea of the investigation.

The paper should also include an introduction that states the aim and background of the study. The introduction must clearly present the research problem and the research questions. Another essential component of a research article is the literature review. This section presents previous related studies and highlights the significance of the current research in relation to existing scholarly work. Recent studies should be integrated to support the review with updated academic perspectives (Author, Year, Page).

Additionally, the methodology section is considered a central part of the research article. It explains how the research is conducted in a systematic and detailed manner. The researcher should follow these interrelated steps to achieve a well-structured and effective study in any field, as illustrated in the following table:

Table1: Paper Structure



Source: (Prem, 2023)

3.Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To conduct this study, the researcher opted for a quantitative descriptive design to seek the major factors that influence doctoral students' ability to write and submit papers in academic journals. This method of investigation facilitates the systematic gathering of appropriate data from participants and helps analyze different patterns along with different variables.

An online questionnaire was designed and administered to 20 doctoral candidates. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, requiring participants to select one of five response options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.

3.2. Sampling

This research targeted 20 doctoral students and academic researchers who are actively enrolled in the doctoral program in English Language department of Naama University. Thus, a purposive sampling was selected to reach participants who are in the phase of writing articles and papers for their doctoral program. The sample size contains 20 participants, so even the number is not large, but it serves to explore and analyze the answers of the students regarding the challenges faced in publication.

3.3. Results and Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to scrutinize the barriers that hinder researchers from publishing their manuscripts in academic journals. Data was presented in the form of tables for a clear identification of the factors that affect academic publication.

Data collected through an online questionnaire consists of six suggested categories: Writing Proficiency and Text Structure, Time Organization, Supervision Support, Peer Review, Psychological Barriers, and Language Issues. Respondents designate their appropriate option by levels of agreement.

The findings identify potential barriers and challenges to academic publishing besides the support of institutions and supervisors. The researcher attempts to analyse and interpret the answers across the suggestions and highlight the main obstacles.

Table 2: Writing Skills and Structure (N = 20)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Difficulty in structuring a paper	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)
Difficulty in refining a research into a concise paper	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	9 (45%)	3 (15%)
Difficulty in producing literature review	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	8 (40%)	3 (15%)
Proficiency in writing	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)
Difficulty following journal guidelines	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)

The findings show that academic writing represents a major challenge for doctoral students. A considerable proportion of respondents (60%) experienced difficulties in structuring research papers and following the journals submission guidelines. Similarly, 60% acknowledged difficulties in transforming extensive research into brief publishable manuscripts, while 55% reported difficulties in developing literature reviews.

These results explain that academic publication requires not only a deep knowledge of subject but also developed scholarly writing capabilities. Novice researchers often face difficulties in organizing arguments, integrating literature, and respecting the writing conventions. Such obstacles and challenges may decrease publication productivity and delay the dissemination of research findings. Consequently, doctoral programs should offer targeted training in academic writing, manuscript preparation, and journal publication methods to increase researchers' publication readiness.

Table3: Time Management (N = 20)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Lack of time for writing	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	4 (20%)
I have teaching duties that hinder my writing	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)
I follow a clear writing schedule	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)

- The results reveal that time management is a significant barrier to publication. More than half of the respondents (55%) reported insufficient time for academic writing, while 50% indicated that teaching responsibilities interfere with their ability to prepare manuscripts. In contrast, only 30% stated that they follow a clear writing schedule.

It is indicated in the findings that doctoral students face difficulty in balancing multiple academic responsibilities. The absence of effective time-management strategies may obstruct research productivity and delay publication process. In fact, successful academic writing entails planning, goal setting, and regular writing habits. Thus, institutions should support doctoral researchers through management policies and workshops related to research planning and productivity.

Table4: Peer Review (N = 20)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel stressed about submitting papers	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	4 (20%)
Reviewers remarks are often hard to understand	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)
Being rejected demotivates my submission	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)

Peer reviewing helps in academic growth	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)
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- The data reveal that the peer-review process is considered as a source of stress by many students. More than half of the respondents (55%) reported anxiety about submitting manuscripts, while 50% indicated difficulties understanding reviewers' comments. Moreover, 40% stated that manuscript rejection negatively disturbs their motivation to submit their work.

These findings suggest that doctoral students often regard peer review as a threatening process rather than developmental one. Although peer review is aimed to develop research quality, insufficient familiarity with reviewers' prospects may cause uncertainty and discouragement. The results emphasize that rejection and critical comments and feedback are common experiences in academic publishing. Therefore, supervisors and institutions should provide guidance on understanding reviewers' comments and managing rejection positively as part of the publication process.

Table 5: Supervisory Support (N = 20)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor guides me for research publication	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)
I receive training on academic publishing	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)
I lack guidance on the process of submission	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)

Answers regarding supervisory support were varied. While 40% of participants reported that they receive guidance from their supervisors concerning publication, a large proportion demonstrate dissatisfaction with the level of support available. Additionally, 45% indicated that they receive insufficient training in academic publishing, and many mentioned that they lack guidance during the manuscript submission process.

These results underscore the significance of mentorship in doctoral education. Supervisors play a critical role in socializing students into academic publishing practices and helping them cross the complexities of manuscript preparation and journal submission. Insufficient guidance may lead to uncertainty and lower publication productivity. Hence, structured mentorship programs and publication training may help strengthen doctoral students' research productivity.

Table 6: Psychological Factors (N = 20)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel uncertain about the readiness of my research for publication	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)
I delay my submission due to fear of being rejected	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)
I feel confident sharing my paper to scholars	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)
I am negatively influenced by publication pressure	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	4 (20%)

The results point out that psychological factors considerably influence publication behavior. Half of the participants expressed uncertainty about the readiness of their paper for publication, and a similar proportion reported that they delay submission because of fear of rejection. Furthermore, only 35% felt confident sharing their work with the academic community, while the majority stated that they are influenced by the pressure associated to publication requirements.

Low confidence and fear of negative assessment may discourage researchers and students from submitting their work in spite of possessing sufficient research skills. The findings suggest that the writing training should be accompanied with emotional and psychological support to support better confidence among doctoral researchers.

Table 7: Language and Communication (N = 20)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I find it difficult to write effectively in English	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	4 (20%)
I believe that language concerns affect reviewers evaluation	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)
My paper needs extensive editing before being submitted	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)

- Language-related challenges emerged as another major barrier to publication. More than half of the respondents (55%) reported difficulties writing effectively in academic English. In addition, 50% supposed that language issues influence reviewers' evaluations, while half indicated that their manuscripts require significant editing before submission.

These findings are mainly significant in contexts where English is used as a foreign language. Academic publishing requires proficiency in both discipline-specific discourse and argumentation. Limited language proficiency may influence the clarity and eloquence of manuscripts, thus reducing their chance of acceptance.

The findings support previous studies that explore language barriers as a major obstacle for non-native English-speaking students or researchers. Accordingly, universities should take into account providing specialized academic writing support, manuscripts editing services, and publication workshops to reinforce researchers' communication abilities and boost their publication success.

The present study sought to highlight the major barriers that doctoral students come across when trying to publish their research in academic journals. The findings show that publication challenges are multidimensional, including academic writing skills, time management, peer-review experiences, supervisory

support, psychological factors, and language-related difficulties. These factors seem to collectively influence doctoral students' publication output and confidence.

One of the most important findings concerns challenges and difficulties correlated with academic writing. A large proportion of respondents experienced challenges in structuring research papers, writing literature reviews, and following journal guidelines. These results support the view that academic writing is a complex skill that entails mastery of disciplinary conventions.

Doctoral students still struggle to communicate their findings efficiently in a publishable format although they may have adequate research knowledge. This suggests a necessity for systematic training in academic writing and publication practices.

On the whole, the findings reveal that successful academic publishing demands a combination of individual capabilities, psychological readiness, institutional support. Addressing these interrelated factors may develop doctoral students' confidence, research output, and ability to contribute successfully to scholarly knowledge.

4. Conclusion

The current research explored the major factors that impact the doctoral students' capabilities to write and publish manuscripts in academic journals. This analysis focused on six elements which are writing skills, time control, peer review, supervisory support, psychological factors, and language barriers. The results demonstrate that academic publishing is guided by several obstacles and issues.

Students noted that they encounter difficulties in writing academically, limiting their research area, producing a concise literature review, and managing their time between their teaching duties and their research.

On the other hand, students indicated their struggle with psychological factors such as lack of confidence, being anxious about publication rejection, in addition to the pressure they feel about the necessity of publishing. Challenges related to language and communication also have been reported. Students lack training in academic writing, this requires extensive writing programs or workshops.

As regards mentorship, some researchers claimed that their supervisors guide them effectively whereas others reported that they receive insufficient support.

Students in this phase of research needs institutional training in publishing, workshops organization and supervisor's guidance to enable them to write successfully and thus be accepted in academic journals.

Overall, this investigation emphasizes the significance of a comprehensive approach for the benefit of doctoral students by integrating skill improvement, guidance, strategies of time management, linguistic support in addition to psychological support. Tackling these issues helps boosting scientific development

and productivity, increasing the rate of publication acceptance, and encourage the researchers to work hard.

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