BASIC GUIDE FOR WRITING PAPERS

Background

This brief guideline outlines the basic structure the papers presented for publication under this grant should be presented. All researchers should ensure that the papers are structured, as much as possible as per this guideline so that the papers are received in a format that can be immediately considered for publication after review.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), research is a process that systematically collect, analyze and interpret data to further understand a problem. Thus, research is regarded as a cyclic process (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010) which is illustrated below.

Research interprets the meaning of the data, which leads to a resolution of the problem, thus supporting or not supporting the hypotheses and/ or providing an answer to the question that began the research cycle. At this point, one or more new problems may emerge.

1 Research begins with a problem: an unanswered question in the mind of the researcher.

2 Research defines the goal in terms of a clear statement of the problem.

3 Research subdivides the problem into appropriate subproblems.

4 Research posits tentative solutions to the problem(s) through reasonable hypotheses. These hypotheses direct the researcher to appropriate data.

5 Research looks for data directed by the hypotheses and guided by the problem. The data are collected and organized.

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RESEARCH
IS A CYCLIC PROCESS

Source: Leedy and Ormrod, 2010.

Though there is no single correct way to write an academic article (Kotzé, 2007), the frameworks and principles presented here are based on articles generally published in academic journals.

Structure of the article

This section will provide a brief table that illustrates the components of the article and an approximate length that the researcher should conform to. It is believed that papers that are successfully submitted to a journal for publication has three main components (Fisher, Jansen, Johnson and Mikos, 2012) namely, (1) overall idea, (2) execution of work, and (3) presentation of the work. It is important that emphasis is given equally to all these three components when papers are published for publication.

According to Kotzé (2007) typical journal article should be between 4000 to 7000 words. The following table is adapted from the detailed documentation on the guidelines to write academic articles (Kotzé, 2007).

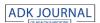**Table 1: Structure of articles submitted for publication**

Component	Description	Estimated length
Title	The title should be short and precise while should try to attract the readers attention to the paper. Since the title describes the contents of the article it is important that the title reflects the main theme of the article. It is best that the title is formulated after writing the full article (Bem, 2003).	10 to 20 words
Abstract	The abstract is a short summary of the article that splits every component of the article to a few words. Most people will first read the abstract before deciding to read the article. Hence it is important to keep it short and precise.	200 to 250 words
Keywords	Select a few key words from your research. Relate the key words to the main theme or discipline of your research. In modern terms these keywords can interchange as tags, specially for internet publications.	5 to 8 words
Introduction	The introduction should give a short summary of the entire article. According to Perry, Carson and Gilmore (2003), "the introduction must grab the readers' attention with a hook." The introduction should tell the reader why the paper is important, and should seek the attention of the reader by stimulating interest, desire and action (Perry et al., 2003).	500 to 1000 words
Literature Review	Sometimes this is called the background or the conceptual framework. The Literature review should give an overview of the already available research on the the matter and how the research under question will aid to improve the knowledge base. This will be the presentation of your theoretical background leading to your research. Apart from a mere presentation of the literature, the review should critically evaluate, organize and synthesize (Pautasso, 2013) the available literature to align and justify the problem you are addressing in your research.	1000 to 2000 words

Component	Description	Estimated length
Methods	This section will provide the information on how the research was carried out. Since what is presented in the methods section will be used to determine the validity of the study, it is very important that the section is written to the point. It will require a clear and precise description of how the research was carried out and why the specific method was used for the study (Kallet, 2004).	500 to 1000 words
Results	Present your findings in an organized manner with tables, charts and related text. Make sure that significant results are presented precisely in a good flow of the research argument. According to Kallestinova (2011), if the readers are interested in your research, they are interested in what you find out. Hence it is vital for you objectively present your key findings in an orderly and logical sequence (Kallestinova, 2011).	1000 t0 1500 words
Discussion	Annesley (2010) says that "A poor Discussion detracts from a scientific paper. A good Discussion adds a strong finish to a scientific paper. It brings meaning to your study." It is important to interpret and describe the findings of the research in view of what is already known and how these findings contribute to better understanding of the subject. Keep the discussion also precise and clear. The discussion should enable provide a connection to the start of the paper to the end of the findings in a cohesive manner (Annesley, 2010).	1000 to 1500 words
Conclusion	Keep the conclusion as short as possible. I tis important to remind the reader why the research was done and then your final conclusion on the findings. Do not repeat what you have already written. Try to include questions that are of significance from the study for the future. According to Thomson (2012) "The conclusion must succinctly tell the reader how and why it is that what's been presented is significant for practice, policy or further research. They must explicitly say how it is that the article constitutes a contribution to knowledge. They must also address the implications for further research or action."	250 to 500 words
	Approximate length:	4500 to 8000 words

Citations

Citations are an important part of any scientific writing. For the purposes of these papers, the methods used for citations will be based on the most widely used system of referencing by the American Psychological Association (APA). Guidelines for referencing using the APA system can be obtained from the Internet at http://www.bibme.org/citation-guide/apa/.

References

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