



# Why Academic Papers are Rejected

**Dr. Adebajo Adekiigbe**

Department of Computer Science, The Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

## **1.0 Introduction**

The original topic that this paper supposed to address is: “Why Academic Papers are Rejected and How to review Papers”, however, the topic cannot be addressed in one single paper. The author on the other hand addressed the first part of the topic, that is: “Why Academic Papers are Rejected”. It is hoped that the organizer of this seminar will pardon this author for taking the decision to slightly adjust the topic without prior notification. Some views of reviewers concerning academic papers review are mentioned during the course of this paper presentation. Full discuss on how to review academic papers can be slated for subsequent seminar of this nature.

### ***What is an academic paper?***

An academic paper or scholarly journal paper is a peer-reviewed or refereed periodical in which learning relating to a particular academic discipline is published. It serves as forums for the introduction and presentation for scrutiny of new research, and the critique of existing research (Wikipedia, 2015).

### ***Academic Paper Rejection***

Paper rejection is an act of turning down a research paper for publication in a particular journal. Some journals could reject a paper and suggest a less competitive journal to the author while some will even advised that the paper be thrown into the dust bin because of its poor quality.

Rejection happens to all of us, and it can be an unpalatable experience. In the case of submitted papers, authors who are early, as well as those established in their careers, will experience rejection. In response to a rejection letter, one should not react by ripping the letter to shreds or permanently deleting the message if it is in electronic form. Similarly, one should avoid the decision never to write another paper. Many papers originally rejected may ultimately find its way to publication if probably rewriting or better still find more suitable journal for it.

### ***Types of Academic Paper***

Academic papers come in different forms; these include review papers, research papers, descriptive academic papers, argumentative paper, compare/contrast academic papers, empirical research paper e.t.c. (<http://bestcustomwriting.com>, 2015; <http://psych.athabascau.ca>, 2015).

*Empirical Academic Research Paper* is original research in which the research data are gathered by means of direct observation or original experiment. This data is used to answer a research question or test a research hypothesis.

*Review Paper* is a comprehensive report based on a topic or research question and the existing literature available regarding that topic or question. When presenting a literature review, it is necessary to clearly outline both the procedures undertaken in relevant studies (i.e., primary sources) and the findings.

*Descriptive Academic Papers* is to describe a person, object, place, experience, situation etc. in clear details so that the reader can form an accurate mental picture of what has been written in the paper. The author might use various tools - imaginative language, appealing images or interesting comparisons - to accomplish this.

*Argumentative Research Paper* takes place when there is a controversy; this type of academic paper originates from a controversial topic. Such a topic will have countless views which are different from one another and it is necessary that a writer has his own views on this topic.

*Compare/Contrast Academic Papers* requires author to either compare something or contrast something. In compare papers you emphasize the similarities whereas in a contrast paper you emphasize the differences.

## **2.0 *Why do we need to write Acceptable Academic Papers?***

Many writers of academic papers are less concerned with quality of their work; all they care about is quick processing and delivery of such papers probably for the purpose of promotion exercise in their various workplaces. Whereas, our approach to issue of getting our academic paper published have many things to do with the quality of such academic papers. In so many occasions, writers care less about the quality. All what the writer targets are publications, whereas readers, publishers, and reviewers care a lot about the papers to be published.

In as much as papers meant for publications are to be assessed, it is mandatory to improve your writing style so as to be able to differentiate between mediocre and better writing (Jane, 2015). Anyone that writes should be able to articulate why a piece of writing succeeds or fails, and at the same time, he should also be able to recognize the qualities in a piece of writing even when it does not appeal to individual perception. Every writer needs these skills especially when they are to review or critique works by other writers and also when revising, editing, and proofreading their personal work.

Writing academic paper that is acceptable for publications in high quality journals has no simple formula. In other to get published, editors' expectations can vary both between and within subject areas. In anyway, some challenges will confront all categories of academic papers writers irrespective of discipline. Issues that usually confront academic paper writers are, how should one respond to comments and observations of reviewers? Do I have a better way to structure my write-up? If am rejected, should I bother revising and resubmitting to another journal? These and some other questions will always agitate the minds of writer.

When a manuscript is submitted to any high-quality scholarly journal, it goes through intense scrutiny even before it is seen by the editor-in-chief and selected for peer review. For instance, at Elsevier, between 30 percent to 50 percent of articles does not scale to the peer review process (Thrower, 2012).

## **3.0 *Some Reasons why Papers are Rejected by Journal Article Publishers***

As said earlier, writing is an art; it requires persistency and innate skills to write acceptable academic papers in good journals. There are basic characteristics that a good paper must possess before it can be seen to have met the requirements for publication in some high quality journal houses such as Elsevier, Springer etc. In the following paragraph, some traits that makes paper acceptable or not by academic paper reviewers are looked into. These

characteristics are in-exhaustible, but some major ones are considered. Therefore, academic paper writers may consider these as make or mar for the acceptability of their papers.

- a) ***Lack of focus and clarity in the content of paper submitted for publication***-When a paper lacks focus, it is very difficult to scale journal editor's table to peer review stage. At that point, the editor will not waste time in turning down the paper for publication. Academic paper must have a focal point and the content must be very clear and straight to the point. A common reason for articles being rejected after peer review is this lack of context or lack of clarity about why the research is important.
- b) ***Lack of proper organization***-If a paper has a very good content but it is poorly organized, reviewers will be pissed off. Reviewers show less interest to any work that is not chronologically organized. When an article is well organized, it is not only clear; it is presented in a way that is coherent and interestingly pleasing. As part of the organization process, a good paper must have at least some of the following subsections: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion and Conclusion. However, this may varies from one discipline to another.
- c) ***Failure to pick the right publisher for your paper*** – Many times, authors send their academic paper to wrong journal house. For instance, if a paper that deals with communication and computer networks is send to a journal that publishes articles on theory of computation; the editor will not hesitate to turn down such paper for publication.
- d) ***Lack of relevancy of the paper topic and ideas to the philosophy of the journal publisher***—Certain questions must be answered within the mind of the author, such question includes “Do I have a topic that is relevant to the theme of the journal?”, “Does my article capture the ideas and sub-theme of the journal to which I want to submit my paper?”
- e) ***Lack of use of technical language*** – The type of words used in a paper contributes to the quality of such paper. A scientific paper requires use of technical language to report accurately the type of experiment performed. Good writing includes precise and accurate word choices and well-crafted sentences. Any paper without use of proper words is prone to rejection by a good journal house.

- f) *Deficiency in good grammar and style* – Any article that lacks good grammar and deficient in style will suffer rejection. Use of language must follow the rules of grammar and the style must be consistent in ensuring that the article is readable.
- g) *Gross violation of referencing style* – Many writers abuse the referencing style prescribed by publishers. In many cases, the editor will not hesitate to throw back the paper to the author without bothering to even evaluate the content.

All these and many more are issues that reviewers based their decisions on for either to reject or accept a particular for publication in a reputable journal.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

It is important for a writer to be able to discern the difference between good writing and bad writing, hence, your paper is either accepted for publication in a standard journal or being rejected always? A common reason for rejections is lack of context, therefore, ensure that it is clear where your research paper sits within the wider scholarly landscape, and which gaps in knowledge it is addressing. The better your writing, the better your chances for securing a large readership and building a career in academic.

#### **References**

- Eric Gilbert (2013): Dealing with rejection, <http://eegilber.org>
- Jane Winters (2015): *Ways to perfect your writing skill*, Institute of Historical Research's journal, *Historical Research and Digital History*
- Sullivan, G. M., Sargeant J. (2012): *Qualities of qualitative research*. J. Grad. Med. Educ. 3(4):449–452.
- Thrower, P. (2012): *How to Publish in an Elsevier Journal*, Elsevier Publication.
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic\\_journal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_journal)
- <http://www.bestcustomwriting.com/academic-papers-writing-learn-different-types>
- <http://psych.athabascau.ca/html/APA6/paper.html>