

EDITORIAL

The Birth of the Era of Pseudo-Articles

The “*publish or perish*” culture has indeed overtaken the academic landscape, leading many of us—academics and researchers—to prioritize the quantity of our work over its quality. In the context of journal publication, the pressure to publish the “right” number of articles in every issue is pushing editors almost to the edge, forcing us to make difficult decisions that sometimes compromise our own integrity as academics and the integrity of the articles we publish.

As an academic who has derived much of my own knowledge from empirical articles (I spent countless hours sitting in my university libraries back in the 90s and 2000s poring over journals), I truly believe in the power of reading, and in the power, rigor, and integrity of academic journals. Back in those days, when access to knowledge was not as pervasive as it is today with the multitude of online databases and AI-powered search tools, we had to rely completely on printed journals. We would comb through the pages of printed books and articles—very patiently so—in seek of knowledge, and at the end of the long process, every piece of information about theories, constructs and research methodology felt hard-won.

Back then, research was a great toil but reading and reviewing was a great joy. As higher education students, we became knowledgeable from reading high quality, well-written articles from reputable academic journals. Journals are supposed to inform, educate and enlighten, are they not? They are supposed to share recent findings, discoveries, trends and insights into a certain area of research, are they not? It is through high-quality journals that academics, researchers and students are supposed to gain a proper perspective of the cutting-edge work being done in their respective fields, paving the way for new research and innovation to be explored. Not only this, but they should also model good, effective and coherent writing.

I myself learned how to write first from my mother and later from books and well-crafted articles. This was long before ChatGPT and this method, in my estimation, is far more effective. Reading research articles alone has taught me so much. In fact, my own doctoral research was birthed by a highly insightful article about inquiry-based learning, published in the *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* (36:1) in 1999. What I read about inquiry-based learning from that single article has continued to shape my classroom instruction and research to this very day—and it has been more than two decades. Indeed, high-quality, impactful articles can actually transform you!

Those days as a postgraduate student shaped my belief—one that stands firm to this very day—about what academic journals should be and do. Academic journals are supposed to be fountains of knowledge and repositories of well-researched, well-grounded and scientifically proven ideas. They should consist of thoughtful articles that writers have developed through deep thought, critical reflection and culmination of knowledge. They should model good writing for the reader to emulate. If indeed they are what they should be, academic journals have the power to transform the reader—from a mere student to a researcher, an academic, a writer, and hopefully, a scholar.

However, today we are witnessing a different scenario. We see academic journals clamouring to publish articles at a certain fee with expedited processes. And we see the insistence on quantity

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over quality. The result? We have low-quality, subpar articles that offer little value to the reader. We have authors merely crunching words and sentences into “articles” that hold little or no meaning for readers. What we are seeing is the birth of the era of pseudo-articles.

So, what of the transformative role that academic journals are supposed to play? Is it now under serious threat? Is the role eroding under the pressure of the quantity-over-quality culture that is now dominating the publication landscape?

At this juncture, I’d like to pose the question: “What *is* the true value of academic journals and the articles they produce if they no longer uphold the intellectual quality and standards of rigor and depth that once defined them?”

I leave you with this question as you peruse the articles in the January 2025 issue of the IIUM IJES. It is a question that every author must think through before submitting his/her work to any academic journal. Do know that it is not just about “*publish or perish*”. It is about offering real knowledge to the world outside, knowledge that has true value, meaning, quality, rigor, deep thought, critical reflection and intellectual depth.

Are we up to it?

In pursuit of higher standards,

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