

EDITORIAL

On Writing "Healthy and Hygienic" Articles: Advice to Authors

Authors in academia—including faculty and students, especially postgraduate students—write and publish for different reasons. University lecturers, for instance, write and publish to fulfill professional obligations, advance their careers, and contribute to their fields. These reasons are often driven by extrinsic incentives, such as promotion and institutional requirements. In principle, lecturers publish to share research results and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their respective fields (Velazco et al., 2023). In practice, however, the motivation to publish is often driven less by this ideal and more by extrinsic pressures. Some research evidence can be cited for this. English lecturers at a Saudi university, for instance, report publishing primarily to achieve goals related to promotion and contract renewal (Ahmed & Alshammari, 2025). Scholars at Chinese universities reportedly publish to pass university assessments, which is the dominant incentive for publishing in international journals (Lu, 2022). In Nigerian higher education, writing and publication are part of faculty promotion requirements (Izuakor et al., 2026), as is the case within the Malaysian higher education system. Indonesian lecturers, similarly, view scientific writing as a strategic investment for fulfilling functional promotion requirements and increasing credit scores (Siregar & Sihotang, 2024). PhD students and postdoctoral researchers in temporary positions, meanwhile, publish mainly for graduation requirements and career advancement, respectively.

These are all legitimate reasons to write and publish, yet together they point to a "publish or perish" culture that places much pressure on academics to produce output. Personally, I do not feel this culture is healthy. It creates a tension between publication quantity and quality and is a genuine source of stress for academics today. Within this culture, publishing is closely tied to academic reputation. The number of publications an author accumulates serves as a *de facto* performance metric, and a longer publication record is often equated with greater standing in the field. The concern this editorial wishes to raise is that this emphasis on quantity, however understandable given the pressures described above, is increasingly coming at the expense of quality.

This concern is not abstract. As Chief Editor, I am genuinely concerned about what might be called the overall "health and hygiene" of the manuscripts submitted to journals, in particular this journal under my care. By "health," I mean the structural and intellectual soundness of an article. This includes the coherence of its body of arguments, the rigor of its research design, methodology, and analysis, and the extent to which its claims are empirically supported rather than merely asserted. Too many submissions present arguments that do not cohere or assert claims that are not grounded in sound research design or supporting evidence. The effect of this lack of coherence is that readers are left to do the intellectual work the author should have done—reconstructing arguments that were never properly built.

By "hygiene," I mean the more procedural, though no less important, dimensions of scholarly writing. They include correct grammar, careful proofreading, and accurate alignment between in-text citations and the reference list. Submissions frequently arrive with citations that have no

corresponding reference entry, or with reference lists that are incomplete or inconsistent with the text they are meant to support. An article may be conceptually sound and still fail its readers if these hygienic standards are neglected, much as a healthy body can still be compromised by poor hygiene.

These observations are offered not to discourage authors, but to invite a shared standard—one in which both the intellectual substance and the technical presentation of a manuscript reflect the rigor that readers, and the broader academic community, are entitled to expect.

Moving forward, I encourage authors to treat both dimensions with equal seriousness before submission: to seek feedback on argument structure and methodological soundness from colleagues or mentors, to proofread carefully for grammatical accuracy, and to verify that every in-text citation has a corresponding, correctly formatted reference entry. I want to be clear that correcting an article's in-text citations and reference list is not the journal's responsibility—it belongs to the author and co-authors. A healthy and hygienic manuscript is not simply more likely to be accepted; it is more likely to serve the purpose for which it was written: to be read, trusted, and built upon by others in the field.

Prof. Dr. Tunku Badariah Tunku Ahmad
Chief Editor, IIUM IJES
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