

THE ELABORATION OF RESEARCH TEXTS FOR SUBMISSION TO SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS



Aiming to contribute to the strengthening of research in mental health and addictions, in this volume, we thought it would be good to restate some topics we consider as guidelines for the elaboration of good research and the effective dissemination of its results.

The term scientific text is related to the register of an original research, in a scientific journal, in the standardized format of an article. In a broad sense, the scientific text also includes communications about science, presented through other forms of articles, such as reviews that summarize and integrate the knowledge from previously published studies. Similarly, oral communications, poster presentations, research proposals researchers formulate in different academic or professional contexts, can be considered scientific reports⁽¹⁾.

The elaboration of a scientific article presupposes an organization of the text for the purpose of publication in scientific journals. Its construction should be strictly outlined with its components, which should be distinct and clearly defined. The most commonly used framework for the presentation of scientific knowledge is the division of the paper into introduction, method (material and methods has been the most adopted term), results and discussion. For many years, that was the most recommended way to structure the article. Recently, some journals and editors have preferred other different organization systems, the trend towards uniformity has increased, ever since the American National Standards Institute prescribed the first standard, on two occasions, at the start and end of the 1970's⁽²⁾.

In the various scientific areas, there exist many forms of organizing an article and, at bottom, what determines which form will be chosen are the instructions to authors provided in the publication guidelines of the journals they submit their research to, which tend not to differ that much among several journals nowadays.

Another aspect that needs to be considered in the preparation of a scientific paper is its focus and target public. A research report is an undertaking that is more related to organization than to literary skill. The person reporting on the research is not a literary author in the strict sense. Considering that the scientific article should display the authors' style and literary talent, imagining that that will stimulate the readers, can be an error as, in general, they try to move on directly to the methods and results sections⁽²⁾.

Also, far-fetched formulations in a scientific text either impede or strongly hamper the translation of the study to other language. Certain writing styles, grandiose construction and even the use of characteristic expressions or lengthy descriptions of local socioeconomic, health and education aspects are difficult to translate appropriately when the translator does not find equivalent words or situations. This fact is further aggravated when the authors did not screen scientific papers in other languages for similarities in the terms or in the reporting of local situations present in their Portuguese text, for example, before elaborating the final version.

Therefore, planning an article requires preliminary detailed planning, including the choice of the appropriate form to put the content into a standard shape, the verification of whether the text includes themes, classifications and/or experiences similar to other sociocultural contexts. If that is not the use, approximations should be sought that make sense to all readers (inside the authors' country of origin and abroad). This care should be enhanced if the intent is to submit the paper to an international journal. When the authors do not have this concern and simply forward the paper for translation, the translator simply converts what is written to the required language and, often, the texts do not make sense when translated "literally". This negatively affects their understanding and discourages the reading by people whose mother tongue is not the same as the authors'.

At present, English is the international language of science and will continue being so in the near future⁽¹⁾. Nevertheless, attributing this status to English represents an a-historical view and does not consider the complex linguistic development in course around the world, with an increasing number of bilingual people, including other languages than just English. In the future, the importance of other languages will also grow but, today, the research conducted in countries that do not usually disseminate results in English are less represented in the international academic-scientific media, limiting their range and impact⁽³⁻⁴⁾.

As researchers, it is important not to let one feel overwhelmed by the prestige of internationalism and also value and protect the diversity and applicability of local research. The dissemination of studies relevant to national audiences achieves targets of democratic knowledge dissemination to different technical and academic segments, besides supporting the design of social and health policies.

The development of specific studies on problems or needs of a certain culture is important for global research development on a specific scientific theme, such as the addiction phenomenon. It should be kept in mind, however, that

not all studies are relevant at the international level. Some may not be important in cultural circumstances different from those they were accomplished in^(2,4).

Translation companies inform that the papers author forward for translation often reveal the researchers' lack of knowledge and training to understand what a scientific study is. The limited planning of the study is perceptible through the scarce description of the method adopted and of how the research was executed. In these cases, not knowing how to write in another language is but one relevant aspect of a set of problems⁽⁵⁾.

Bad translations from Portuguese to English are a predominant factor for the return or rejection of papers in journals' review process, but this should not be the main determinant of a refusal. The problem often is not only the translation, but involves the lack of familiarity with international scientific communication codes. The way the authors present the study and its results is a crucial factor in the journal editors' review of the manuscript, which will be positively influenced if the research scenario or theme is interpreted as unedited or rare^(1,2).

One study⁽⁶⁾ about reports of scientific journal editors in Physics, Chemistry and Biology identified the aspects the editors of English language journals considered most important in their assessment of papers forwarded by authors from other languages: clearly written and logically linked, grammatically correct sentences; authors' skill in the language used to present their arguments; language use in a form that reveals that the authors express their awareness of their own positions.

In short, publishing a research in an international or national scientific journal distributed to readers from other countries demands that authors be cautious with the text, paying attention to the way the study is structured and complying with the journal standards and instructions. In the case of bilingual journals (like SMAD), this means complying with the presentation structure and guidelines in the specific standards, certifying that the writing follows the style the journal values and that terms, expressions, abbreviations and others included in the text have equivalents in the journal's languages (English or Spanish for example). It cannot be repeated enough that the text should be organized in sections, written concisely, using clear language, free from fancy words that will hamper its translation, in this case to English.

In this volume, SMAD presents seven papers, three of which (two original studies and one integrative review) relate to the specific population of college students, confirming that they are a knowingly vulnerable group, which is why they are a research focus for mental health and addictions researchers (alcohol and other psychoactive drugs).

The remaining articles discuss relevant aspects of mental health care, such as the promotion of self-care through educative workshops, highlighting their application in the implementation of systemized mental health nursing care. Another text is focused on family care to schizophrenic patients and reveals these caregivers' family life across more than ten years and their future expectations. The other study in this group discusses users with a history of suicide attempt, a theme that has hardly been studied and is very important because of its repercussions. The paper presents the psychosocial characteristics of users with a history of this problem who are attended at a specialized mental health service.

It should be highlighted that the studies were developed by research groups from Higher Education Institutions from different Brazilian regions and therefore involved populations from different cities across the country's states. This peculiarity characterizes SMAD as a journal of national range that arouses the interest of representatives from different health areas. Our target is to continue serving as a high-quality scientific journal, at the local level, maintaining our investments in its further qualification to achieve higher quality levels, which can permit its inclusion among international mental health and addictions journals.

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