

REDUCING JOURNAL REJECTION RATES IN THE DIGITAL ERA: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Abstract

Research remains an important human activity that propels society forward. Research remains indispensable. But unfortunately, many scholars and lecturers experience paper rejections, especially by well-known, reputable journals. Despite the high rate of paper rejections, journal articles on how to reduce journal rejections are very few. The impact of journal rejection on researchers is rarely spoken about. This is what makes this paper important. This paper argues that there is a serious need for researchers to be aware of the steps and preparation needed to reduce journal paper rejections, as well as the digital tools and ways that can also reduce paper rejection. The paper is a qualitative library research based on secondary sources and the personal experience of the present writer. As a qualitative study, it relies on critical analysis and hermeneutical interpretation to unravel the issues involved in the paper. The paper finds that many researchers have their papers rejected by journals for lack of adequate preparation, lack of knowledge of the issues needed for acceptance, and lack of adequate contribution to knowledge and originality. The paper concludes that if the preparatory steps towards submission of papers are undertaken and there is a positive and healthy attitude towards peer review, even challenging ones, researchers will get many more journal acceptances instead of rejections.

Keywords: Academic, Digital, Journal, Practical, Rejection, Strategies, Success.

Introduction

One of the most important human activities that has moved human civilisation from its primordial stage to the present is research. Research is important for human beings to uncover, discover, and enable them to evolve, grow, develop and find fulfilment. It is through research that human beings find solutions and answers to the myriad of problems, puzzles and perplexities that confront humans. Research enables humans to know what to do in a challenging situation. Research enables humans to find the way out of the dilemma. Research helps humans to create and innovate. Peretomode & Peretomode (2015) rightly note that “Our advancement in the sciences, health, economy and technological progress is very much dependent on research”(p. 1). Research is important in every area of human endeavours. And so when you research, you should publish it. Writing academic papers and getting them published is important for societal progress. matter. Avwokeni (2019) argues that research is done to test a viewpoint or give an answer to a fundamental question

Agbedo (n.d) says research is gathering information, data and acts to advance human knowledge; and if it is scientific research, it is done methodologically. Asemah, Gujbawu & Okanachi (2012) corroborate the above idea and also explain that research gives answers to questions, provides new information and finds relationships among variables. In the words of Osuala

(2005), research is a dependable way of getting solutions to problems in a systematic and planned method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Osuala (2005) shows further that research is important to advance knowledge, promote human progress, enable people to effectively manage their environment and achieve their purpose. Research is vital in every field of human endeavours, whether in business, industry, household, relationships, etc. For instance, in business and in industry, owners of companies often carry out market research to enhance the sale of their products or determine what product to produce.

This paper is concerned with helping researchers, academics, students and many others to do better research and get their work published by ensuring that they overcome all negative pitfalls that lead to journal rejection of their papers. Ramulifho & Fltchett (2025) argue that at one time or the other, all academics will face rejection. For the *Journal of Human and Work* (2025), their rejection rate is shown below. Every form of rejection is painful. It is painful to write after all the effort and still get rejected. Rejection does not mean you are a failure. You need to get past the pain of rejection and keep going with your writing. Persistence and endurance are key factors in doing research. Take, for instance, the book *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe (1958), which was rejected by many publishers. The *Journal of Human Work* (2025)

presents the statistics in the table below on the paper rejection rate of the *Journal of Human Work*.

Year	Number of Accepted Articles	Number of Rejected Articles	Acceptance Ratio	Rejection Ratio
2025	19	52	%27	%73
2024	19	48	%28	%72
2023	11	24	%31	%69

Table 1: Paper Rejection Rate of *Journal of Human Work* (2025)

Scholars Review Team (2026) states that:

Recent publishing data shows a staggering statistic: between 30% and 70% of all manuscripts submitted to academic journals are desk rejected without ever reaching peer review. At top-tier journals, the numbers are even harsher, where the overall journal acceptance rate is routinely under 10%, meaning over 90% of submissions are rejected before or during review (para 5).

The Journal of Cinema and Media Studies, published by Michigan Publishing (2026) in cooperation with the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, states that its

acceptance rate is about 15%.

Methodology

This paper is a qualitative research paper based on secondary sources. It is a library research paper, and no fieldwork is undertaken. It will depend on books, journals and online sources. It uses hermeneutics and critical analysis to examine the issues that the paper deals with. By way of procedure, the paper shall hereafter explicate the key concepts and move to examine the practical steps or strategies for journal paper acceptance while overcoming rejection. Under the strategies for working towards paper acceptance, the paper will examine remote preparation, then proximate preparation and the actual writing or composition of the paper while noting what leads to paper rejections. The

paper will also highlight the need for ethical use of digital technologies in research.

Explication of Concepts

Keywords that are important to understand here are reducing, journal, rejection, digital era, practical strategies and academic access. The word “reduce” means to minimise, bring down, not accept, or deny. Reducing in this paper means countering or eradicating the negative effect of something so that it does not happen. Reducing in this sense means that the negative act of having a journal paper rejected is being acted against. Reducing means actions should be taken to improve the acceptance of journal papers sent out by researchers. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (n.d) states that reducing means: “to become or to make something become smaller in size, amount, degree, importance, etc”(para. 1). You normally reduce what is negative or what is undesirable. The word rejected has to do with denial. Non-acceptance of a thing or person. To reject is to discard. It is to throw away

Merriam-Webster (n.d), states that a journal can refer to a daily newspaper, a book recording experiences, or a periodical dealing with current matters of interest. As used here, a journal is a scholarly periodical dealing with issues and various subject matters. There are different journals in different

disciplines and subject matters. Vancouver Island University (2024) states that:

Journals are periodical publications containing articles related to a particular subject area, or academic discipline. Journals are published at set intervals throughout the year (monthly, quarterly, biannually, etc.) and are each assigned a unique volume number and issue number that typically identify the number of years the publication has been circulating and how many times the journal has been published so far that year(para. 1).

Articles in academic journals normally go through peer review if they are to be recognised. Academic journals must have editorial boards and a body of consultants made up of experts in their fields. They also have journal guidelines to guide those who submit papers. They also have editorial policies.

. The word “digital” has to do with all online communication technologies and systems. It is the virtual world in which communication takes place, often without face-to-face or physical interaction. Yasar (2023)states that:

Digital describes electronic technology that generates, stores and processes data in terms of positive and nonpositive states. Positive is expressed or represented by the

number 1 and nonpositive by the number 0. Thus, data transmitted or stored with digital technology is expressed as a string of 0s and 1s. Each of these state digits is referred to as a bit; a string of bits that a computer can address individually as a group is a byte (para. 1).

Digital Humanities Institute (n.d) states that: “The meaning of digital has altered substantially in recent years with the advent of the internet, the World Wide Web, handheld devices, mobile networks and super-fast computing.” The Digital Humanities Institute (n.d) states further that it is: “...something created using some form of computer that can be transmitted via the internet, or the tools used to create and transmit this output as digital data”(para. 1).

Practical strategies refer to tips, action points, and techniques that can be used, deployed or applied to achieve a goal. Strategy can refer to a plan, action plan, style or method that can be adopted to achieve a goal. Merriam-Webster (n.d) states that: “a careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal usually over a long period of time”(para 1). The term “academic success” also requires explication. No kind of success just happens. Success must be planned for and worked towards. Academic success is having progress and victories in your academic life, whether as a student, lecturer, or

researcher. Academic success is achieving your goals and your targets. When you achieve your academic goals, it positively impacts your life and wellbeing and improves your mental health and productivity.

Practical Steps for Journal Acceptance Remote Preparation

Writing an academic paper does not just begin with sitting at the desk and composing it. It begins long before the author sits at his desk to write the paper. This is important for academic success. There is a saying that: “Early to bed, early to rise.” It is also said, “As you make your bed, so you lie on it.” Preparation is key. Preparation is half the task; you need adequate preparation. Writing becomes stressless for you when you are well-read and have knowledge of the subject matter.

A practical step is that before you write on a subject matter, research the issues, read about the issue, listen to discussions on the issue if need be, before you begin to write. Conceptualise in your mind the issue you want to tackle. Mentally form an outline and mentally discuss the paper before you put pen to paper. Be an avid reader. It is said that readers are leaders. Cultivate a high power of imagination. Be an imaginative thinker. Be able to see what other people are not seeing as you watch the news, watch the movies and films, read books and journals and as you observe life. “Think outside the box,” as the popular statement says.

But also think and unravel what is inside the box. Think beyond the horizons. Mill (1999, as cited in Thomson & Kamler, 2013) writes that: “social sciences require their practitioners to shift perspective—from the personal and individual to the social and historical, from isolated events to those that are connected and contextualised” (p.13).

It is important to stay in your element or niche. You should not be a generalist. Be known for something in scholarship and academic work. If you type the name of this present author into ChatGPT, it will give you his niche and element. At times, ChatGPT will tell you he is the foremost Urhobo environmental philosopher in the entire world. You flow in your niche, and so it becomes easy for you to write in that area, and this enhances your productivity. The importance of specialisation can never be overemphasised. If you were to go to the hospital to treat your teeth, it is likely you will see a dentist rather than a general medical doctor.

Proximate Preparation

The first thing here is to ensure that as you submit your paper, it is not rejected at the desk by editors. Watson (2019) says that desk rejection is when the editors reject your paper without sending it for peer review and other processes, or immediately reject it. It should be understood that desk rejection does not necessarily mean your paper is not publishable; it could

just be that it is not suited for that journal because of its scope. This is why it is important to study the scope of a journal before submission. Herron (n.d) presents seven (7) points that often result in desk rejection of papers. She states that misalignment of a paper with the scope of the journal, a paper that does not fill any gap, poor methodology, unethical issues in the paper, refusal to follow the guidelines of the journal, and unclear writing and weak positioning can lead to desk rejection of a paper. Some academics rush into writing papers without caring for the guidelines of the journal. Some only look at the guidelines after they have written and try to fit their paper into the guidelines. It is important to look at the guidelines from the beginning, even before you start. It is part of your remote preparation. Journal guidelines are one of the keys that hold the path to paper acceptance. When you don't follow the guidelines, the journal editors see you as an unserious author who cares nothing for their journals. They are likely to throw your paper away. It can be said that submitting a paper to a journal is a process of give and take. Give the editors what they want in terms of following their guidelines, and you are likely going to get published.

The guidelines for papers are likely going to include things like word count, font size, line spacing, abstract word count and what the abstract should contain, referencing style, and some even tell you the procedure or

methodology to adopt. Sindhuja (2025) writes that journal guidelines include: “.. .guidelines on the font size, font type, heading levels, reference style, and other specific requirements. The journal style can also underscore other aspects of manuscripts, such as manuscript length, including word count limits, number of pages, figures, tables, and accepted file formats for display elements” (section 2). A journal called *Philosophia* in the Philippines writes the following about the author's responsibility. Permit a long quotation from *Philosophia* (2026), as it helps to establish this important point that can help in acceptance of papers and reduce rejection:

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for providing complete references. An abstract of not more than two hundred words, summarizing the thesis or intent of the article, should be appended along with the brief curriculum vitae of the author. Contributors should keep their own copies of all materials submitted. They should also include their respective email and exact mailing addresses. It is the responsibility of the author to prepare his/her manuscript for blind review. It is also the author's responsibility to make sure that his/her work is

original and not plagiarized.

A paper submitted to *Philosophia* for review and publication consideration must not be submitted to another journal when it is currently under review by *Philosophia*; otherwise, he/she must inform the Editorial Board, and the review process will be discontinued. For co-authored works, authors should provide an author's contribution statement identifying the parts and their contributions (para. 3).

The journal is very clear: the author should provide an abstract of not more than 200 words, provide a CV, include an email and mailing address, and ensure the work is original, with no double submission. If you were to submit your paper without your CV, email and the other requirements, it shows that you are not serious. The requirements of *Philosophia* may be different from those of another journal. That is why you must read the guidelines of each journal. Don't presume they are the same. Take the example of another journal, *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, published by Taylor & Francis (2026); it provides the following content under the instructions for authors. How can someone write for this journal without studying the instructions?

You should study the journal before writing, and not write and then submit. Many authors make the mistake of first writing a paper, then looking for a journal to submit to. The journal *Screen*, published by Oxford Academic (2026) states that:

All submissions must conform to Screen formatting and referencing as specified in the instructions to authors, and figures should be prepared at low-resolution (72 d.p.i.) for peer review. These can be saved in .jpg, .gif, .tif or .eps format. If your submission is accepted for publication, you will need to provide final versions of all figures as high-resolution .tif files (1200 d.p.i. for line drawings and 300 d.p.i. for colour and half-tone artwork). More information on preparing figures for publication (para. 1).

There is a detailed explanation of the guidelines on the page. Is it wise for you to submit to the journal without reading and following the guidelines? Apart from the author guidelines, read about the journal, the aims and objectives of the journal, and the scope of the journal. Read about the process of submission, review and publication. Read about the information for reviewers and even editors of the journal. This helps you to know the mind of the journal and what is being looked for in your paper.

Read and study carefully three to five actual papers published by that journal. Study the issues they deal with, the style they follow, and the methods and procedures. Try to replicate their overall outlook, not by copying but by imitating the model. You see a journal with a paper on: *The Implications of Trans-Atlantic Slavery for Today's Ghana Situation*. You can aim to do a paper that deals with *Pan-Africanist artists and their Relevance to Contemporary Ghana*. Therefore, mimic the other paper in the journal in terms of procedure, but not words. It is like saying reproduce the pattern, but not the content of that paper. Plagiarism is unethical and is to be avoided by all means. It is an academic crime.

Know that some journals actually give you their template. If you don't follow the template, they are likely going to reject your paper. This is another reason why you need to read the journal website and know what they want. Some journals require submission on their site, not just through email. Imagine a journal that requires you to submit through their submission system, and you are sending it through email. Some journals are very clear that you must format your paper following their format. It does not make sense to write and then not follow the format. Sindhuja (2025) writes that: "Most journals follow a standard format: Title, Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion,

Conclusion, and References.” Many of the reasons why papers are rejected have been stated above, but they can never be overstated. It is important to restate them in some other ways because we are aiming to overcome rejection. Thomson & Kamler (2013), writing from the ideas of Graham Hobbs, Editorial Director of Taylor & Francis, state that there are ten (10) top reasons for rejection:

1. Sent to the wrong journal; does not fit the journal's aims and scope
2. Not a proper journal article (i.e. too journalistic, or clearly a thesis chapter, or a consultancy report)
3. Too long (ignoring word limits for the particular journal) or too short
4. Poor regard to the convention of the journal (failure to consult Notes for Contributors) or conventions of academic writings generally
5. Bad style, grammar, punctuation; poor English (not corrected by native speaker)
6. Fails to say anything of significance (i.e. makes no new contribution to the subject) or state the obvious at tedious length
7. Not properly contextualised (i.e. concentrates on parochial interests and ignores the

needs of an international or generally wider readership)

8. No theoretical framework (including references to relevant literature)

9. Scrappily presented and clearly not proofread

10. Libellous, unethical, rude (pp. 129-130)

Actual Writing and Composition

Hartley (2008) writes that: “Scientific text is precise, impersonal and objective. It typically uses the third person, the passive tense, complex terminology, and various footnoting and referencing systems” (p.3). Right from the earliest days in the study of the English Language, students are made aware that their research must make use of the third person, though not always. There are exceptions to that rule, especially in a positional paper. Detach yourself from the paper. Don't be emotional. Be critical and analytic. Most forms of writing should be seen as an argumentative essay. You are trying to prove a point. Do it by countering the opposition to your point. Be persuasive. There is always an opposing side to the point you are making. Pay a little attention to the other side and debunk their position.

Your paper must contribute to scholarship, a field of knowledge or society. There must be a knowledge gap that you are filling. This is why it is important to be an avid reader, a keen observer and familiar with the

research in the field. Know what is already there and what you are adding. It is true that you are not reinventing the wheel, but don't just re-echo or regurgitate what is there. Be creative and innovative in your research. Ramulifho & Fltchett (2025) write that papers submitted to the *South African Journal of Science* risk rejection because they lack a meaningful contribution to knowledge or the field, and they often simply repeat what is there, have weak methodologies, fail to engage current literature, are filled with excessive jargon, fail in ethical concerns and lack well-structured results. Gupta et al. (2013, as cited in Silva & Nazarovets, 2025) state that 54.5% of papers were rejected in *Indian Paediatrics* for lack of contribution to knowledge; and as McKercher et al (2007, as cited in Silva & Nazarovets, 2025) state, 60.3% of rejections in hospitality and tourism journals were a result of lack of poor contributions to knowledge.

The contribution to knowledge is highly important. Thomson & Kamler (2013) state that writing should have value, move thinking forward, it should change the field, destroy ignorance, bring new light, and should add to the field. Thomson & Kamler (2013) use the idea of David Gillborn, editor of the journal *Race and Ethnicity in Education*, to say that your paper should make a strong point and make it convincingly instead of trying to make many points. This is why you should treat your paper like an argumentative

essay: argue for one point, not many. Always treat it like a debate; you cannot be on both sides of the debate. Journal writing is like a conversation; lead your readers to one point. A journal paper is not an encyclopedia, and don't aim to win a Nobel Prize with this one paper. Make the point and conclude your paper. There will be opportunities to write other papers. Don't aim to say all you want to say in life in one paper. Plan the writing as you should plan every other thing in life. Write following an outline of sections that you have designed. In order to achieve your goals, set time aside to write and have a major time you have set aside outside to write. Time management is crucial in writing for publication. If your time is not well managed, you will end up not achieving much. It is important to manage your time in terms of other responsibilities that you have, such as your spiritual life, your family life, your social life, etc.

Your methodology is very crucial. Don't take it for granted. Study the predominant methods that the journal accepts. This author studied the website of the *KIU Journal of Law*, and this present writer notes that the predominant method in that journal are the doctrinal method. He started studying the doctrinal method. Hesterman et al. (2018, as cited in Silva & Nazarovets, 2025) show that weak methodologies, poor conceptualisation, and contradictory internal logic cause 85.8% of rejections in the journal, *Headache*. Clackson

(2012, as cited in Silva & Nazarovets, 2025) relates that in *Contemporary Accounting Research*, rejections were a result of problems with research questions and methodology, and this resulted in 82.7% of rejections. Scholars Review Team (2026) corroborates the above fact when it states that many manuscripts are rejected for insufficient literature review, lack of content, poor journal fit, non-adherence to formatting guidelines and technicalities, poor methodological gap, weak design and weak abstract.

Digital Technologies and Artificial Intelligence in Research

And in this world of Artificial Intelligence (AI), be cautious. AI tools can help you research, but don't copy content from AI. Ensure that all sources that AI guides you to are properly cited in the text and referenced. AI is a tool that makes research easier. You are more intelligent than AI. Let it be your servant, not your master. AI can prompt you with ideas and sources, but be on top. Acknowledge every insight and idea by its source. Copying and pasting other people's ideas and words is unacceptable. The world is now globally digital. You cannot live outside digital tools. Use digital tools like the internet, the World Wide Web, AI, and other tools to improve and transform your writing. But avoid plagiarism and copying and pasting what you get from ChatGPT, etc. You can use the Grammarly tool to correct

your grammar and spelling. As you use AI tools, look and observe. AI tools are not perfect; they can make mistakes. It is unethical to use AI tools to write your paper and submit it as your own. Let your research actually be your research and the fruit of your labour. It is your voice that is speaking and not a parrot's voice. Be the researcher and not the shadow. It is criminal to plagiarise from the internet, AI apps, etc. It is crucial to say again that plagiarism is unethical.

Make use of digital technologies in your research wisely and prudently. Abide by all the ethics that regulate using digital tools in research. Abuse remains abuse. What is unethical remains unethical.

Submission Review and Correspondence

Many journals give their checklist for you to check and tick to ensure all that is required of you is in order. Tick the checklist. Check the checklist and ensure that all that they require is included. Don't be in haste to submit. Ensure everything is in order. Work ahead in time instead of waiting till the year of promotion before you begin writing. You are likely to burn the midnight candle, which is detrimental to your health. Ensure your paper is submitted on the right platform, email or submission system. Don't trouble editors regarding your paper; allow them to do their work.

What to expect when you are expecting

Responding to Replies: Not every paper you write will come back to you with positive comments. Some papers will be returned to you requesting minor corrections, moderate corrections and major corrections. Some journals may outright reject your paper even without replying to you. Be grateful for comments that come back to you. Don't take it personally or quarrel with reviewers or editors. They are carrying out their duties and responsibilities. They may have their own biases, idiosyncrasies, attitudes, etc. Different reviewers see papers from different perspectives. When you are asked to make corrections, respond to them creatively and in time. Don't delay corrections that you are supposed to make and then blame the journal. Attend to all requested corrections. You can, if need be, politely disagree and state that you think the comments should be seen differently. This author has written papers in which he was asked to follow APA style, which he followed in the paper. He simply wrote back, explaining and showing them that APA style had been followed and the website he followed. Even after peer review, a paper can still be rejected. Silva & Nazarovets (2025) enumerate many reasons why a paper can still be rejected after peer review. Consult that paper on this issue. This is why it is important that you diligently make the corrections. Consult with others, especially those who have

written for the journal. In this digital world, you can reach out to people across the Atlantic and Pacific. You are not omniscient. Allow people to mentor and guide you. Jonsson (2003, as cited in Thomson & Kamler, 2013) writes that: "The first thing to note in this situation is that the decision 'revise and resubmit' establishes a new bond between author and editor and reviewers because there is a common wish toward improvement. In spite of all the critical points raised to be revise decision puts you in a very good position. Do not waste it by interpreting reviewer comments as hostile!" (p. 488)

If a paper is rejected and it comes with comments, study the comments as you rework the paper, possibly for another journal. Silva & Nazarovets (2025) write that when a paper is rejected, it can cause emotional frustration to authors. Besides contributing to knowledge, academics need published papers in good and recognised journals for promotion. Thomson & Kamler (2013) write that:

The word rejection sounds like abjection and dejection. This is possibly no accident, since these are precisely the kinds of emotions that accompany a rejection. The writer feels as if they, not just their article, are not good enough. Nowhere is the know of text work/ identity work more apparent and more at risk than when the article is sent back with no option of

changing it. The decision is final. There is no way to retrieve it. It's a red card (p. 129).

But note that, as Fraser (2010) argues, take pain to write your paper, attend to details, read the author's instructions, do not give up when you receive bad reviews, listen to the advice of reviewers and do not get angry; rather, get published. Murray (2009) says you should transform rejection into learning and get published. When rejection happens, it can be painful and even frustrate an author. Don't allow them drown you. Ali (2021, as cited in Silva & Nazarovets, 2025) says that publishing is a privilege, not a right, and people emotionally respond when their paper is rejected. Venketa subramanian & Hennerici (2013, as cited in Silva & Nazarovets, 2025) write that people go through the cycle of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression). You must prepare in time. Plan your writing life. Do not allow other things to overwhelm your writing. You may regret it later. Cultivate a balanced life. Ensure you have a recording system or notebook where you list out all papers published, papers sent out and papers you are working on so that you will not do a double submission.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how to reduce journal rejection of papers submitted to them. It highlighted the importance of research in human civilisation. Research in various forms

has brought humanity to where it is today. Research has brought answers and solutions to human problems and other challenges encountered in living in this world. The paper also noted the emotional toll and pains that come to researchers in their research when they face rejection. It showed how researchers should handle rejection. The remote and proximate preparation in writing for publications were emphasised. The need for researchers to read widely, watch films and movies, observe life and build a storehouse of knowledge and ideas in their minds and hearts was noted. As they write for journals, they must follow the guidelines of the journal and ensure they contribute to knowledge. It is the viewpoint of this paper that if researchers can follow the tips and suggestions presented in this paper, they will greatly avoid journal rejection and succeed more in their academic career and thus equally enhance their lives and contribute to humanity.

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