Tips on Getting Published

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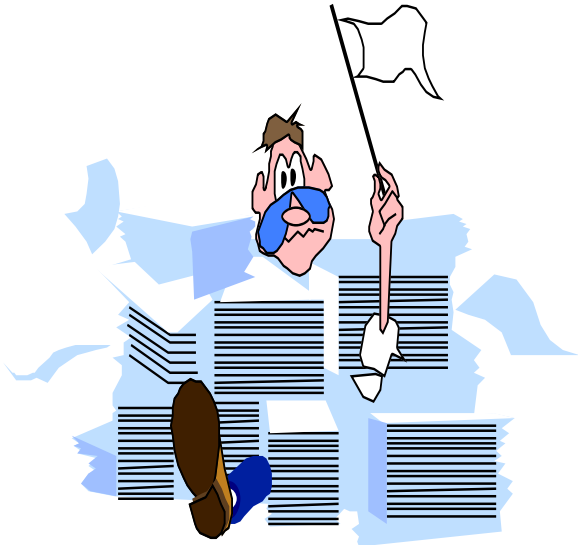


Key Points for Getting Published in a Good Journal

- **Do good research that will have an impact!**
  - Address an important issue that makes a significant contribution to knowledge
- **Be strategic when planning your research**
  - Where do you think you could publish the paper that will come from the research?
  - Which journals would publish your paper?
- **Use an appropriate research method and research design**
- **Polish your paper before you submit it to a journal** – submit version 25, not version 1 or 2

State your RQ in the Introduction

- **Explicitly and precisely state your RQ in the introduction to the paper**
  - Must be clear rather than vague so no misinterpretation about what your paper does
    - You don't want the reviewer(s) to assume your papers is about something else!!!
- Can be stated as a formal RQ or can be "in our paper, we examine …"
- **Key terms should be defined** as many terms have different meanings or operationalization
  - e.g., earnings quality or audit quality defined / measured many different ways

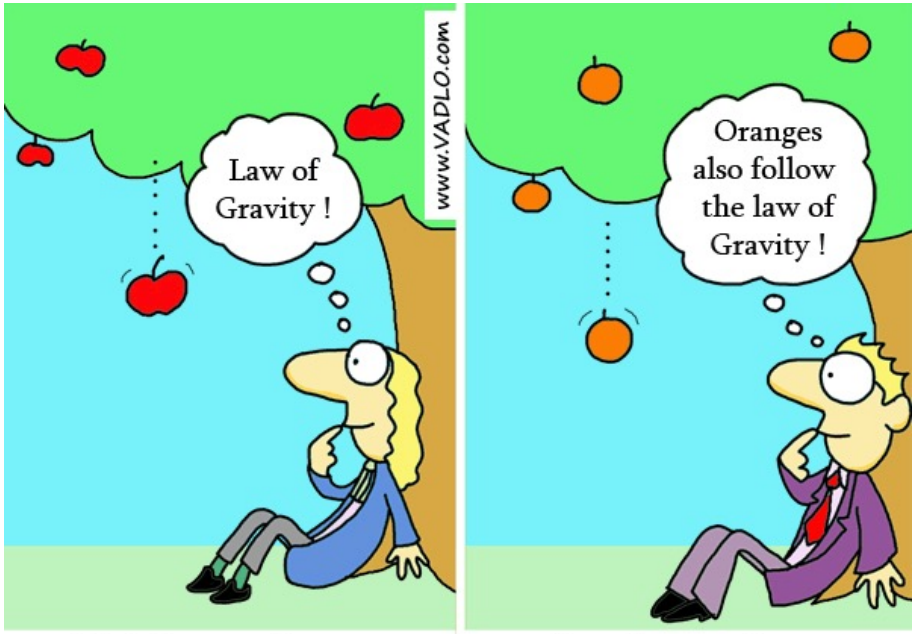
Scope of your RQ

- **Decide on the scope of your RQ and make this clear in the introduction**
  - Scope affects the focus of your study, the validity of your findings and the contribution of the study
- Most studies only address one or two key issues
- **Focus on key issues that make an important contribution**
  - Consider whether expanding the scope to address more issues will provide new insight into the main issues
    - If providing new insight, then expand the scope
    - If just adding one more issue, then perhaps do not expand the scope in that direction as it will dilute the focus of your study

Does your RQ involve an association or causal relation?

- Most accounting research examines associations rather than causality
  - Causality is a stronger finding
- Affects your research design
  - Most archival, survey and field studies examine associations because of the simultaneous and endogenous nature of the data unless you have an exogenous shock variable
    - However, results have strong external validity
  - Experiments better suited to establish causality
    - Strong internal validity but external validity is weaker

High vs Low Impact Papers



Contribution is Critical

Paper needs to make an important contribution to the literature

- Must add something important to our understanding of accounting
- Lack of incremental contribution is one of the most common reasons for rejecting a paper
  - Criticism often applies to studies that replicate an existing paper using a different sample, e.g., same issues using data from a different country
  - Criticism often applies where the result is obvious based on previous studies
  - Criticism often applies where the twist in the new study is not that different, e.g., examining the effect of one more risk factor on audit fees

What is a great research idea?

- A great research idea is one that confronts or contributes to a "grand challenge"
  - "grand challenges" are the big puzzles
    - How do we solve poverty and climate change, cure cancer, etc.?
- An idea that deals with a large unresolved problem that tackles that problem with a bold and innovative way that goes beyond existing explanations
- An idea that allows you to explain how your study solves a piece of a larger puzzle, and in doing so moves the discipline forward with rigor and relevance
- An idea that is novel and interesting - would it change the way that people think about an issue?

What is a great research idea?

- An idea that results from knowledge recombination with something new being created by building a bridge between two literatures or disciplines
- An idea that is not perceived as a marginal extension of the existing literature
  - Avoid topics in very mature areas unless you can really come up with something novel
- An idea that is not so narrow that the results cannot be generalised to other settings
  - Narrowness can be the result of the topic itself or the result of a researcher salami slicing rather than going for one big important paper
- An idea that counters a reader's taken-for-granted assumptions

What is a great research idea?

- **An idea that makes an important contribution to the literature that also has implications for practice (i.e., the results are actionable) – McGahan (2007)**
  - **Offers counterintuitive insights**
  - **Highlights the effects of new and imported practices**
  - **Show inconsistencies in, and consequences of, practice**
  - **Suggests a specific theory to explain an interesting and current practice or proposed practice**
  - **Identifies an iconic phenomenon that opens new areas of inquiry and practice**

Not many studies address the "grand challenges"

Topic is Interesting and Important

Paper is more likely to be published if the topic is interesting and important

- **Relates to a pervasive phenomenon**
- **Relates to an emerging trend, e.g., disclosure of non-GAAP earnings or assurance on CSR reports**
- **Relates to a controversial regulatory issue, e.g., disclosure of audit partner's name in the US**
- **Is an economically significant phenomenon**
- **Addresses a fundamental accounting question, e.g., value relevance, credibility of accounting information, effectiveness of controls**

Topic Extends Previous Research

Paper is more likely to be published if it extends previous research

- **Adds insight by examining an issue form a new perspective or theory**
- **Adds insight by examining an issue in a new setting where the results are likely to be different because of factors such as institutional setting, regulatory environment, culture, etc.**
- **Study reconciles previously mixed results, e.g., effect of audit tenure on audit quality**
- **Study resolves a puzzle in the literature**
- **Results cannot be inferred from previous research**
- **Results are not obvious – there is tension because of competing arguments or theories**

Study has Important Implications

Paper is more likely to be published if it has important implications

- **Need to address the “so what” or “who cares” questions**
- **Who benefits?**
  - **Regulators**
  - **Auditors**
  - **Financial report users such a investors**
  - **Mangers**
  - **Researchers**
- **How do they benefit?**

What is NOT a good research topic?

- One that is motivated by nobody has ever examined that topic before
- One that is motivated by nobody has ever examined that topic in a particular country
- The results are trivial, not economically significant, etc.
- One that adds to conflicting results rather than reconciling conflicting results
- One that we already know the answer to, or the answer is just obvious
- One that nobody is interested in the answer to your RQ

Introduction section of the paper is critical

- **Draft an introduction and see whether you can sell your idea to others**
- **Introduction should answer three sets of questions – Grant and Pollock (2011)**
  1. **Who cares? What is the topic or RQ and why is it interesting and important to theory and practice?**
  2. **What do we know, what don't we know, and so what? What significant, unaddressed puzzle or controversy does your study address and why does it need to be addressed?**
  3. **What will we learn? How does your study significantly change, challenge or advance our understanding of this topic?**

Introduction - Motivation and Significance

Introduction should

- set the scene and introduce your research problem / question
- identify the significant, unaddressed puzzle or controversy your study address and why it needs to be addressed
  - describe where your paper sits in the literature
- describe the importance of the research
- describe what the study does and its contribution(s) (both theoretical and practical) to the literature is stated early in the introduction
- describe how the problem is approached and explored
- briefly describe what was done and what was found
- describe potential benefits of the research

Measuring the Value of Your Research

Review of Previous Research

- Often a brief review in the introduction as part of motivating the study
  - Should flow into an explanation of how the current research extends previous studies and makes an important contribution to the literature
- Trend is to integrate the literature review with the development of the RQ / hypotheses rather than having a stand-alone literature review section
- Literature review should not just summarise previous studies
  - Should integrate previous research rather than present a series of abstract summarising previous papers

Theory / Conceptual Framework

- Good papers have good theory / conceptual framework or develop / extend a good theory
  - Results without theory don't really advance our knowledge of accounting phenomenon
- May use a formal theory or develop logical arguments
- **Arguments should be applied to the RQ** rather than discussed in general terms or summarizing
- **Arguments should lead to the RQ or the expectation expressed in the hypothesis**
  - A common issue raised by reviewers is that the discussion preceding a hypothesis does not lead to the relation between the IV and DV in the hypothesis

Research Questions and Hypotheses

- Research questions are developed from a critical assessment of prior research and identification of weaknesses or gap
  - should be a logical link between the discussion / critique of prior research and research questions
- In qualitative research, articulate the RQs the paper aims to answer
- In quantitative research, propose hypotheses based on theory
  - hypotheses are developed from the literature and theory
  - hypotheses are stated in a testable format
  - where appropriate, hypotheses are directional (as are the tests)
- Discussion preceding a hypothesis / RQ leads to (develops) the hypothesis / RQ

Research Questions and Hypotheses

- Hypotheses and predictions should be based on consistent assumptions
- Specify how mechanisms actually work in practice
  - Talk to practitioners
  - Conduct surveys, case studies or field studies
  - Try to tease out what really happens through your data analysis

Research Design

- Developing a sound research design is one of the most important steps in conducting research
- A research design is the plan to answer your research questions.
  - It includes a set of methods and procedures to collect and analyse measures of the variables specified in the research question and/or hypotheses.
  - The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables you to effectively address the research problem logically and as unambiguously as possible
- Make sure that the research design fits the research problem
- Control for alternative explanations so you can rule them out
- Be careful how you measure constructs or ask your questions
- Be careful how you select your sample

Research Method and Design

- describe research design and specific data collection techniques used (e.g., archival, questionnaire, interviews)
- describe data sources and/or recruitment of participants
- when using qualitative methods describe research setting, your role as a researcher and interactions in the research setting, as well as time spent collecting the data
- when using quantitative methods make sure model is clearly set out, all variables are clearly described/defined and other (confounding) factors are controlled in the design
- experiment should be clearly described (e.g., manipulations, procedures, tasks)
- make sure survey / experimental instrument is properly designed and described including sources of questions and procedures to validate the instrument

Research Design and Analysis for Archival Studies

- Choose good proxies for the constructs you are measuring
- Every variable should have a definition such that the reader could replicate the study (e.g., compustat codes)
- Models should include key control variables from previous studies
- Provide a convincing reason why data and sample selection criteria are suitable
- Data and sample selection criteria are well described including how you arrived at your final sample size – include a table showing initial sample and how you got to the final sample
- Any sample biases are stated/treated

Archival Studies

- Analysis relates to the hypotheses to be tested
- Appropriate conclusions are drawn from the results
- Discuss economic significance as well as statistical significance
- Rule out alternative explanations
  - Measurement error
    - Try different measures of the construct, e.g., different measures of industry specialisation
  - Omitted variables – unobservable variable(s) omitted that are correlated with both the DV and IV
  - Self-selection bias - value of DV is observed only for a subsample that depends on some endogenous choice, e.g., choice of auditor or voluntary choice to issue management earning forecast

Archival Studies

- Include additional tests to rule out alternative explanations
  - Use of cross-sectional or sensitivity tests to examine under what conditions results hold
    - Helps rule out omitted variables as long as the omitted variables are not related to the cross-sectional conditions
  - Change analysis – use change in DV and change in IV in the analysis
    - Helps mitigate against the effect of stable omitted variables when changes in the omitted variables are approximately 0
  - Analysis based on exogenous shock – identify an exogenous event that causes changes in one or more Ivs and include as IV
    - natural experiment that seeks to exploit environmental changes that are beyond the control of firms, investors and other strategic players so not determined by the model

Archival Studies

- Table of descriptive statistics is presented
- Correlation coefficients presented in a table
- Analysis techniques are defined and appropriate
  - clustering
  - fixed effects
  - how you address endogeneity, etc.
  - Treatment of outliers described
- Tables are stand-alone, i.e., every table should have a key
- If the sample size changes from table to table, provide an explanation

Research Design and Analysis for Qualitative Studies

- Qualitative studies often used to develop theory rather than test a theory
- My comments are more on positivistic orientation rather than interpretivist or critical approaches

Establish the reliability of your data

- **Maintain good records** of data collection protocols and analysis procedures so that others can replicate your results by following the same steps
  - Describe the interview questions and how validated
  - Describe and justify the research setting andparticipants and how / why selected
  - Indicate whether interviews were recorded after providing assurance of confidentiality
  - Transcripts checked for accuracy?

Qualitative Studies

- Describe the role of the researcher
- Describe your approach to data analysis and specific techniques employed
  - Be explicit about how you developed your knowledge claims
- If appropriate, provide a good description of coding process and some evidence of actual codes and coded texts (often given in an appendix)
  - Use multiple coders who are blind to the theory
- Use multiple sources of data to corroborate your findings (e.g., interviews, observations and source documents)

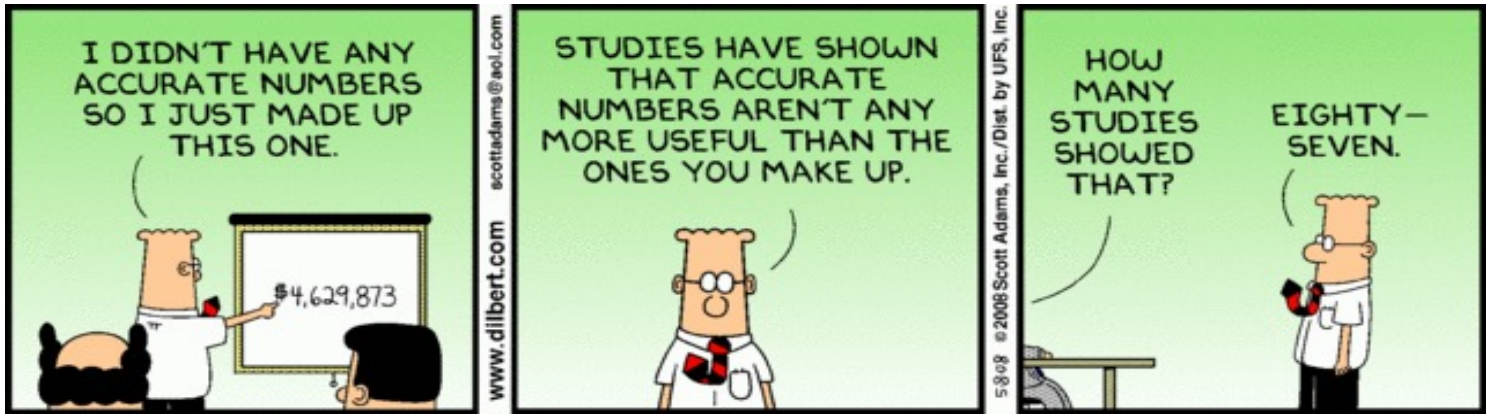
Qualitative Studies

- Be sure that a presentation of results, i.e., your story from participants' perspective (first level analysis) is authentic and comprehensive
- Avoid confirmation bias by paying attention to data patterns that are not explained by your theory
- Avoid just reporting results that only tell the story that you want to tell
- Make sure your discussion section provides a theoretical analysis (second level analysis) of the results, and thus answers your research question(s)

So you've collected your data....

- Be very careful when analysing your data
- If you're in over your head - get help!
- Interpret your data honestly
  - don't bias your interpretation to get the answer you wanted
- If your hypotheses are not supported or the answer to your RQ wasn't what you expected
  - first, check your original data
  - check your analysis
  - still not what you expected?
    - think through the possible reasons
    - good opportunity to expand theory

Analysing Your Data



Writing up the paper....

- **If your paper is not well written, it is likely to be rejected even if you had a good idea and a well executed study**
  - Write in short, clear sentences
  - Avoid redundancy
  - Check that sentences are logical and are logically related within a paragraph and between paragraphs
  - Does the discussion before a hypothesis / RQ actually lead to the hypothesis / RQ?
  - After the first couple of drafts, put the paper aside for a week or two and then reread it
    - don't submit the first draft to a journal – you should be submitting version 20++
  - If you're not a good writer - use an editor!!!!!!

Make sure your paper is compatible with the journal and complies with all journal requirements

- topic of the paper (e.g., must address some aspect of ethics for JBE)
- style of research and research method (e.g., qualitative vs quantitative)
- complies with journal style requirements (e.g., headings, referencing, etc.)
- includes references from that journal
- structure of paper is consistent with other papers published in that journal

Quality of Overall Presentation

- spelling (including authors' names), grammar and punctuation checked
- clear and concise writing
- title clearly indicates what the paper is about
- terminology used to describe phenomena, events, variables or tests is consistent throughout the paper
- citations in the text are consistent (e.g., with regard to '&' and 'and' and et al.)
- no missing references
- references are in alphabetical order
- use appropriate and consistent decimal places
- when reporting results from statistical analysis, double check all statistics in the paper against the tables and against your statistical output files

Reading Decision Letters and Review Reports

- read the decision letter very carefully
- assess whether the decision is reject, revise and resubmit or accept
- read the review reports carefully and consider how you can/will address each point
  - do not discount what the reviewer says (e.g., if they say something is unclear, assume that it is unclear rather than assume the reviewer is an idiot)
- wait a couple of weeks and then go through the review reports again
- discuss how to address the issues with your co-authors and colleagues
  - draft your intended response to the reviewers and agree this is how you will respond before revising the paper

Resubmissions When You Have a Revise and Resubmit Decision

- revised paper addresses all of the reviewers' comments (or explains why some issue(s) cannot be addressed/remedied in the response to the reviewer)
- resubmission includes a "Response to the Reviewers", which reproduces the review points raised by the reviewers and a description of how you have addressed each point
- do not make unnecessary changes outside of the issues raised by the reviewers – you can make things worse

Don’ts

- **Do not motivate a paper with “no prior research has done this before” or “no one has investigated this in country X” – you need a better motivation**
- **Do not motivate a paper with “there are conflicting results in the literature” unless you plan to resolve those conflicting results. Otherwise you are just adding to the conflicting results.**
- **Do not make sweeping statements (especially criticisms) without references,**
  - **e.g., don’t say things like “prior literature has failed to do so and so”, or “prior studies always assume blah blah” etc. unless you are 100% confident or have references to back up your claims**
- **Do not overclaim your results or the implications of your results**
- **Do not present a literature review section that reads like a chronological series of abstracts**

Dont's

- Do not develop your hypothesis by just citing the results of prior research
  - e.g., "several studies have reported a positive relation between X and Y (Jones 1991; Smith 2009; Wang 2011; Zhou 2013), therefore I expect a positive relation between X and Y".
    - use theory and/or logical arguments.
    - consider whether you need a hypothesis for X - should it just be a control variable?
- Do not send an early draft of a paper to a journal just to get some comments
- Do not ignore valid comments received when presenting your paper at a conference or seminar
- Do not necessarily revise a paper for every comment that you get – you have to consider whether the comments are valid

Dont's

- Do not ignore review points when revising a paper!!!!!!!
- Do not assume the reviewer just got it wrong or didn't understand your paper – the problem could be with your paper rather than the reviewer!!!!
- Do not send a rejected paper to another journal without revising it and addressing at least some of the points raised in the review from the journal that rejected the paper
- Do not underestimate the amount of work required to get a good publication
- Do not ignore reviewers' advice to collect additional data even if it is a lot of work

Useful References

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Good luck with publishing your research!