Author perspectives on what’s broken in the academic publishing process

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Have you seen the news?

Let’s begin with some facts for perspective...
Previously identified gap in perspectives between authors and editors

**Authors think...**
- They understand publication ethics and do their best to adhere to standard guidelines
- They address and respond to all peer reviewer comments
- Journal instructions for authors are often incomplete and unclear

**Editors think...**
- Authors don’t realize the importance of publication ethics
- Authors only address the peer reviewer comments they find agreeable
- Journal instructions for authors are generally clear and complete

This causes a lot of pressure...

For authors
And for journal editors

What would ease up the pressure a bit?

Journal editors bridging the gap and getting closer to authors!

So we asked authors globally for their opinions

- Ongoing survey by Editage Insights, a global learning and resource platform for researchers
- Survey being run in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Portuguese

Seeking authors' opinions on all aspects of the journal publication process

- Manuscript preparation
- Journal selection
- Journal processes
- Peer review
- Open access
- Publication ethics

Supported by the industry

[Logos of various organizations]
Interim results: 5293 respondents

Respondent demographics

Total number of respondents for each survey language

n = 5293

Respondent profile

Which of these primary roles do you identify yourself with as a researcher?

Roles identified when selecting "other"
Top 10 countries represented (current location)

Number of authors currently working in these countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Author respondents by field of study

Fields identified when selecting "other"

- Architecture
- Business Administration
- Chemistry
- Civil Engineering
- Communications Science
- Economics
- Education
- Management
- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Public Health
- Psychology
- Veterinary Medicine
- Nursing

Experience and English proficiency of author respondents

- How many papers have you published in an international English-language journal?
  - More than 5: 16%
  - 1 to 5: 7%
  - 0: 77%

- What is your written English proficiency?
  - English is my first language: 16%
  - English is not my first language: 84%

- How long have you been involved in academic research and/or journal publishing?
  - More than 5 years: 50%
  - 1 to 5 years: 38%
  - Less than 1 year: 12%
Publication-related challenges authors face

What do authors struggle with most?

Percent authors who find specific stages of the publishing process “VERY DIFFICULT”?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript preparation and submission</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to peer reviewer comments</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting a journal for your manuscript</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking manuscript status in journal submission systems</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring compliance with relevant ethical guidelines</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 4427

Familiarity with good publication standards

Which of the following bodies/guidelines are you familiar with?

- COPE
- ICMJE
- Declaration of Helsinki
- GPP2
- CONSORT
- All of the above
- None of the above
What aspects of manuscript preparation are “VERY DIFFICULT”?

- Framing a research question: 28.2%
- Structuring the manuscript in IMRAD format: 20.7%
- Creating figures and tables: 16.8%
- Creating the manuscript title and abstract: 15.9%
- Conducting a literature review: 15.8%
- Preparing information from previous studies in your own words: 15.0%
- Preparing figures and tables: 15.0%

n = 3797

I feel lost and don’t know where to look: 6.3%
I approach my seniors or colleagues: 5.0%
I check on specific social media or an online forum for researchers: 3.5%
I search online using a search engine: 3.0%
I ask my librarian for resources or visit my university writing support center: 2.5%
I approach my seniors or colleagues: 2.0%

n = 4277

*Multiple selections allowed

Perspective-based questions for authors

I think...
How do authors choose a journal for their manuscript?

Factors considered, ranked from most important (1) to least important (7)

1. The journal should have a high impact factor for my field
2. The journal should have published similar papers
3. The journal should offer a short time-to-publication or have a rapid publication option
4. My colleagues and seniors should be reading the journal regularly
5. The journal should have a clear and professional-looking website
6. The journal should be open access or have an open access publishing option
7. The journal’s submission process and charges should be clearly mentioned on its website

Perspectives on journal instructions for authors

In general, how well do you think journal guidelines for authors are framed?

- Clear and complete: 16%
- Clear but incomplete: 27%
- I don’t know: 12%
- Unclear and incomplete: 22%
- Unclear but complete: 22%

Perspectives on open access publication

Have you ever published in an open access journal, or chosen to make your paper open access in a subscription-based journal?

- Yes: 58%
- No: 42%

Reasons for publishing open access (% respondents)
- Increase research reach (34.3%)
- Coincidence (28.6%)
- Preference for OA (16.6%)
- Publication guarantee by the journal (15.6%)
- Institutional/funding body mandate (7.3%)

Reasons for not publishing open access (% respondents)
- Coincidence (34.3%)
- Affordability (29.5%)
- Lack of understanding (15.7%)
- Mistrust in quality of OA journals (13.6%)
- No adequate benefits of OA seen (7.3%)

*Multiple selections allowed*
Do authors approach journals without hesitation?

Have you ever written to the journal for queries or clarifications during the publication process?

If yes, how did you find their response?
- Prompt and clear (42.7%)
- Delayed but clear when it came (20.4%)
- Prompt but not clear (17.7%)
- I didn’t get any reply (20.2%)

If no, why not?
- I didn’t have a query (51.1%)
- I didn’t know how to contact the journal (21.6%)
- I didn’t know I was allowed to contact the journal (17.4%)
- I was scared to contact the journal (10.0%)

x = 3760
### Perspectives on time to publication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I haven't had a paper published yet</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 months</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 6 months</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 months</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
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<td>8.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 3 months</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 6 months</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6 months</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
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### Duration of manuscripts at different stages in the journal workflow

#### "WITH EDITOR"

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<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 days</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 30 days</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1 month</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
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#### "UNDER REVIEW"

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<tr>
<td>Less than 5 days</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 days</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 30 days</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1 month</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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#### "DECISION IN PROCESS" OR "WAITING DECISION"

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The verdict...

Would you like to change something in the publishing system?

- Yes (check my comments below)
- No, I am satisfied with the system

51.7% Yes, 48.3% No

n = 3712

Main pain points and author-suggested areas of improvement:

1. Time to publication
2. Peer review process/quality
3. Fairness/objectivity/bias
4. Affordability (costs/charges)
5. Pressure to publish
6. Process standardization

n = 3712
Why take months to close to a year just to say no
There should be an effort to uniform manuscripts requirements such as file
type, file size, figure embedding and so forth)

Sample author comments about the journal publishing system

Yes, the system needs to be faster and less bureaucratic.

High impact journals charge too much to publish an article.

It should have a defense system where authors can file
complaints.

Young researchers should have a different section for
publication in each peer-reviewed journal.

More access to resources / help for publication

I believe that the pressures should be reduced in order to get a really good, reproducible study.

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Key takeaway... There’s a lot that’s broken!

Let’s begin by fixing the basics!
1. Reduce time to publication
2. Increase transparency in peer review
3. Eliminate bias
4. Communicate effectively with authors
5. Create new opportunities for young researchers
6. Offer learning resources

Get involved!

Participate in the Editage Insights survey and share it with your authors!

https://www.editage.com/survey-author-perspectives-on-academic-publishing

Question Period / Open Discussion

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