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Özet

Amaç: Bir makalenin her yayıncının özel talimatlarına göre hazırlanması ve sunulması, yalnızca yazarlar için değil, aynı zamanda hakemler için de zaman alıcıdır. Makale hazırlama ve sunma konusunda pratik ilkeler hem zaman tasarrufu sağlamak hem de bilimsel bilginin yayılmasını güçlendirmek açısından faydalı olacaktır.

Gereç ve Yöntemler: Dergi sitelerinden, yayıncıların yazarlara yönelik talimatlarından, çevrimiçi başvuru kaynaklarından ve dergi editörlerinin, yazarlarının ve hakemlerinin deneyimlerinden ilgili verilerin toplanmasıyla kesitsel bir çalışma gerçekleştirildi.

Sonuçlar: Yazarlara bir makalenin gönderilmesine ilişkin talimatlar, çeşitli dergilere göre önemli ölçüde farklılık göstermektedir. Bu varyasyonlar kapak mektubu, başlık sayfası, özet, referans formatlarının yanı sıra makale yazı tipi ve boyutunu da içerir.

Tartışma: Tüm dergiler için makalelerin hazırlanması ve sunulmasına yönelik standart bir modül üzerinde böyle bir fikir birliğine varılmasının hem zamandan tasarruf edilmesi hem de yayıncılıkta sürdürülebilirliğin sağlanması açısından faydalı olacağını düşünüyoruz.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Makale, Yazar kılavuzu, Talimat, Gönderme, Dergi, Standardizasyon, Yayınevi

Abstract

Objective: Preparation and submission of a manuscript per the specific instructions of every publisher is time consuming for not only authors but also for reviewers and authors as well. Practical principles for manuscript preparation and submission will be useful both to save time and to reinforce spread of scientific information.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was performed by collection of relevant data from journal sites, publishers' instructions for authors, online submission resources and experiences of journal editors, authors, and reviewers.

Results: The authors' instructions for manuscript submission differ remarkably per various journals. These variations include formats of cover letter, title page, abstract, references, as well as manuscript font type and size.

Conclusion: We suggest that reaching such a consensus on a standard module for preparation and submission of manuscripts for all journals will be useful for both saving time and maintenance of sustainability in publishing.

Key Words: Manuscript, Author guidelines, Instructions, Submission, Journal, Standardization, Publisher

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Introduction

Writing scientific papers is currently the most widely recognized method of disseminating findings and contributing to science (1).

Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach to organizing the many components of a research paper (2), scientific writing is an experimental science (2), and some guidelines have been developed to improve the quality of research dissemination (3,4).

Especially in recent years, progress in technology has taken place with great steps. With this rapid development in information technology, there has been an abnormal increase in the number of scientific journals (5). Scientific publications are necessary for the dissemination of scholarship (6). Scientists postulate theories and studies into articles within certain rules and submit them to journals for contribution to the literature.

There are countless journals and publishing institutions all over the world, and new ones are emerging every day. Although the article writing rules are similar in many of these publishing companies, some have different rules and practices.

During the preparation of scientific articles, authors have to revise the manuscript from the very beginning as for the rules of the journal they intend to submit. However, when the opinion for the journal to be submitted is changed or when the article is rejected by the journal, it is a very strenuous and time-consuming task to rearrange the whole manuscript per the rules of the consecutive journal. If the submission guidelines and author instructions in scientific journals are standardized by various publishing organizations per the requirements and common principles of the Information Age, variations in the submission process will be minimized. Thereby, it will be much easier for the authors to prepare and submit their manuscripts without waste of time and loss of motivation.

We aimed to outline the need for the accomplishment of a standard format for author guidelines for journals to enhance the submission of manuscripts. In this manner, we hope that spread of scientific knowledge will be facilitated and scientists will be encouraged to publish the results of their studies without any delay.

Materials and methods

Study design

This cross-sectional study was performed by the analysis of instructions of authors for submission of manuscripts in various journals. In this aim, author guidelines announced by publishers, as well as experiences and opinions of editors, authors, and reviewers were collected by using a literature review. The information for authors derived from journals directed by a total of 14 international publishers was comparatively examined and differences and similarities between the guidelines were outlined.

Results

The instructions for authors for submission of a manuscript differ remarkably per various journals. In some journals, the abstracts are requested as a single paragraph, while in others, they are requested with the titles objective, materials and methods, results, and conclusions. In addition, manuscript font type and size vary from journal to journal. The word limit in the abstract content differs between journals.

There are differences in the number of keywords and even for the separator marks to be used between them. Many journals require semicolons as separators, while others require commas. The arrangement of references is required in alphabetical order by some journals, and in some journals according to the order of the first appearance in the article. Page and figure formats can be different according to the journal. The conflict of interest and author contribution forms differ according to the publishing organization.

Some journals prefer separate discussion and conclusion sections, while others request the conclusion section to be included in the discussion. The submission of the copy of institutional review board approval was necessary for some journals, whereas others accepted a declaration of acquisition of approval without seeking submission of the institutional review board approval.

The features of items to be submitted in journals of various publishers have been demonstrated in Table 1. It can be noted that almost all publishers have their policies and guidelines with significant differences between each other. Therefore, the need for harmonization is evident between

Table 1. A comparative overview of author instructions to be adhered during manuscript preparation before submission (N/D: no data).														
Publisher #	Abstract structure	Word limit for abstract	Keyword limit	Separation of keywords	Manuscript font type	Manuscript font size	Reference style	COI	Author names	Figure format	Figures and tables	Word limit for manuscript	Abbreviation	ORCID no.
1	Background Methods Results Conclusion	300	3-6	N/D	Arial, Courier, Times New Roman, Symbol	12 point	as appears in the text	Permission request and licence		Tiff EPS Pdf MS-Office	≤8	N/D	At first mention in the text	N/D
2	Background Methods Results Conclusion	250	≤5	N/D	Bold caps, bold lower case, Plain text, Italics	unspecified	as appears in the text	Disclosure of interest		Tiff EPS Jpeg Pdf		≤3000	At first mention in the text	N/D
3	Importance Objective Design Setting Interventions Main outcomes and measures Results Conclusions and relevance	350	N/D	N/D	Any style	10, 11, or 12-point	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	≤5	≤3000	At first mention in the text	N/D
4	Importance Objective Design Setting Interventions Main outcomes and measures Results Conclusions and relevance	350	unspecified	unspecified	N/D	10, 11, or 12-point	Sequential	N/D	N/D	Pdf	Limited (no numbers specified)	N/D	At first mention in the text	N/D

5	Background Methods Results Conclusion Trial registration	350	3-10	unspecified	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	Ethics approval Competing interests Funding Author contributions	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	EPS Pdf Tiff Jpeg Png Bmp MS-Office	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	For corresponding author only
6	Background Methods Results Conclusion	250	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	Tiff Jpeg EPS	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D
7	Structured or graphical	N/D	≤5	N/D	N/D	12 point	N/D	N/D	Disclosure Data availability statement	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	EPS Pdf Jpeg Tiff MS-word	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D
8	Objective Methods Results Conclusion	350	3-5	unspecified	unspecified	N/D	N/D	Sequential, doi no. necessary	Permission and copyright transfer forms	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	EPS Jpeg Ppt Tiff Pdf Gif	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	Encouraged
9	Structured or unstructured	350	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	Sequential	Conflict of interest Source of funding	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	At first mention in the text
10	Unspecified	300	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	Any style	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	EPS Power point Jpeg Tiff Gif	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D

11	Introduction Materials and methods Results Conclusion	250	3-6	N/D	N/D	12 point	Sequential	N/D	N/D	N/D	8	3500	N/D	N/D	N/D
12	Background Objective Methods Results Conclusion	300	10		Times New Roman Helvetica Arial Courier	12 point	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	For corresponding authors only
13	Background Objective Methods Results Conclusion	250	6-8	N/D	Times New Roman	10 point	N/D	Conflict of interest, source of funding	Tiff Pdf Jpeg	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D
14	Background Methods Results Conclusion	300	3-7	N/D	N/D	N/D	Sequential	Conflict of interest, source of funding	N/D	N/D	5	≤3500	N/D	N/D	N/D

publishers for synchronization and acceleration of submission processes.

Discussion

This study focuses on the need for and direction of a standard for representing manuscript contents during submission to journals. We suggest that the achievement of a consensus on a standard format of author guidelines is critical to save time and maintain the motivation of authors particularly in the Age of Information.

There has been a recent and rapid development in the publishing industry. Various publishers have adopted distinct and unique instructions for authors to be used during the preparation and submission of manuscripts. These guidelines mostly differ obviously from that of other publishers. This circumstance necessitates the arrangement of manuscripts per the original guidelines of journals. However, the rejection of a manuscript by a journal or changing mind for submission of the manuscript for another journal mandates regulation of the manuscript again per the instructions of the new journal. This condition leads to significant loss of time as well as hindrance of scientific development. Thus, the development of standards and guidelines applicable for all journals may be useful to overcome this delay and accelerate scientific communication.

Only once an article has been finished following the scholarly norms and the journal's specific formatting and reference guidelines, it can be submitted. Interesting scientific work from a busy laboratory should be disclosed as soon as the results are available so that it may be read and appreciated by everyone in the field and the history of high-quality research can continue (6,7).

The traffic rules are different in various countries of the world. If traffic rules were standard all over the world, how easy it would be to drive when you

go abroad. Similarly, if the submission rules of scientific journals all over the world were standardized, writing would require less effort and would not confuse to adapt the paper across different journals in case of rejection or changing decision for submission to another journal. Thus, time and energy would be saved significantly. Standardization means creating uniform business processes across various divisions or locations.

Academics may face difficulties in getting their work published, especially if they must write in the English language and inside western society, both of which may be foreign to them. Authors must fulfill the rigors of their studies before being considered for publication, including the acceptability of the topic matter for a certain journal, concepts, literature, and instruments. These are questions of author accountability to readers, as well as editor and reviewer responsibilities to authors and, through them, to students and readers of submitted materials (7). Establishment of universal guidelines for submission of manuscripts may aid in reaching these goals and overcome the difficulties for publication of papers.

The volume of digital information is growing as information technology advances and the internet becomes more widely used (5). Unfortunately, most research articles are expected to be written in a traditional format, which some colleagues may not be familiar with. The implicit assumption is that this format is logical in the way it develops parts of the research process, such as the topic, conceptual framework, setting and sample, literature review, findings, discussion of findings, recommendations, need for additional study, limits, and references. Many colleagues in other cultures are confined to primarily quantitative studies, even when the issue does not lend itself to this style. While grammar and style are not the most crucial factors in a manuscript, they do have an impact on how the work is received by others.

Potential authors would be confused if there were multiple formats. In designing a standard, however, key factors such as interoperability, extension, applicability, and openness should be considered in addition to functional and technical needs such as formatting capability and logical structure (5).

The standard format must be capable of representing the vast majority of documents and be available to the vast majority of authors and publishers. However, currently, there is no optimal universal standard in terms of important issues, such as technical and functional features (5).

The referencing mechanism employed in each publication is different. The amount of detail required in references typically may confuse new and inexperienced researchers and authors, and most copy editors spend a significant amount of time acquiring the correct facts. References that are correctly used and written are evidence of an author's professionalism.

Editors of international journals must receive written work from a variety of countries; otherwise, the journal will not be deemed international. We gather information from a variety of sources not only for the sake of the journal but also for the benefit of the readers (7).

Achieving consensus on a common format for article submissions may make it easier for publishers to access information and collaborate with writers to promote content and increase submissions (8). The standardization of format must involve both microstructural and macrostructural components. Macrostructural components include organization, content, and flow; while the microstructural level involves words, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation (9).

Adherence to the instructions for authors and provision of a word count, keywords, and a short title is mandatory for the vast majority of journals. To overcome a rapid rejection, the journal's page structure, figures, and reference style must be followed by the authors (10).

Notably, some journals offer format-free submission to meet the requirements of a different journal. Format-free submission implies you can submit your article without worrying about formatting it to fit the journal's requirements as long as you include everything needed for review and follow a consistent citation format (11).

Further and improved communication between publishers beyond commercial aspects is crucial to achieve these goals. Applicability and

acceptance of our proposal are highly dependent on a positive attitude of collaboration and direct communication between counterparts.

Conclusion

The publication of an academic article is a significant step in one's professional development.

Particularly, the lack of a standard for manuscript preparation hinders the publication process of articles significantly and exacerbates this situation. In our opinion, a consensus on this article preparation and submission process and its use is needed. To conclude, we propose that standard author guidelines be introduced by international scientific organizations to accelerate submission and publication of manuscripts and accelerate the spread of scientific development worldwide.

Author Contributions

Huriye Erbak Yilmaz: Collection of data and study design.

Murat Yılmaz: Writing, collection of data, analysis, critical review, approval of final version.

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