Improving Prospective Authors' Writing and Publication Quality Through Publication-Based Training Framework

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Abstract. To achieve high quality publication is the ultimate aim and objective of every scholarly journal. This paper explains the implementation of international virtual writing camp as the alternative approach offered by the editorial boards of journals to improve the quality of prospective authors during the physical-distancing era where a face-to-face meeting is impractical during the current Sars-Cov-2 pandemic. A virtual comprehensive training was specified to provide those who are interested in sending their manuscript to the journals yet have minimum insight and proficiency to compose what-so-called high quality paper. This approach was conducted in nine phases and took three months, approximately. By the end of the camp, the participants were expected to compose one or more papers that were ready to be sent and submitted.

Keywords: writing camp · writing training · author training · publication · manuscript preparation

1 Introduction

Publishing scientific paper in the scholarly journal(s) has now become an ever-increasing need among Indonesian academics for the last few decades. To write a scientific paper that is proper for publication requires a complex skill and ability [1, 2]. When composing a scientific paper, the authors are required to be able to collect proper information in terms of their content, organize their paper with readable language and structure [2, 3]. Not to mention, to write a high-quality paper we need an advanced literacy skill; i.e. collecting and processing information and generating ideas through effective writing skill. However, these qualities are commonly not satisfied by the authors, particularly when dealing with the academic writing to compose readable paper [4–6]. The authors, when submitting their paper(s), repeatedly took for granted what they have written in the manuscript. Numerous authors did not take into account how important the quality of writing was since they were not sufficiently exposed to the academic discourse [2, 4, 6].

The prominent aim of scholarly journals is to publish readable and standardized papers, and it is imperative. To ensure the quality of papers published in the journal, it

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is within the responsibility of editorial boards [7]. The journal editor has been, and still is, the standard bearer to peer-reviewed scientific publications, who essentially specifies whether or not a paper can be published [8]. Unfortunately, the journal editors must face a dilemma in deciding whether the articles must proceed to the next phase of review or be accepted. Frequently, the journal editors must choose to publish the paper as it is (under the circumstance where the paper does not require significant change but still considered as low quality). The option was taken since the number of manuscripts submitted to the editorial office were limited for each issue. Hence, the journal editors must surrender the standard to at least fulfill the current issues.

The above-explained condition indeed denounces the notion of scholarly publication to disseminate high-quality research—it is critical for scholarly journals to disseminate scientific work for expanding the knowledge [9, 10]. In the near future, when the journal editors surrender, to a great extent, the standard of publication, it may lead to unprogressive development of the journal as the primary channel for disseminating scientific research. Regarding this notion, the role of authors in journals is important as well. Therefore, it is essential for the journal editors to embrace wholeheartedly the authors to satisfy the standard (an international standard) of publication by providing author's training. In most cases, the prospective authors have no ideas what to write and present within their manuscript since they are a student of higher education and have insufficient exposure to scientific publication in a journal. Numerous students are difficult to compose readable manuscripts since they do not pay attention to poor grammatical and sentence structure; misspelling within the body of text; and the collocation used according to the context [11]. In addition, most students obtained insufficient exposure to the international standard of manuscript writing due to cultural issues [3].

To acquire high quality manuscripts submitted to the editorial office, this paper proposes a comprehensive writing training to the prospective author to satisfy their writing in accordance with the international standard of publication. This proposal aims at offering a student-centered training in the context of research and publication since they sometimes acquire insufficient practice in their classroom learning [12, 13]. Therefore, an extensive and in-depth training for the prospective authors is required to be conducted to enhance paper quality which simultaneously will be beneficial for both authors and journal editors.

1.1 Training Frameworks

1.1.1 General Overview of Training

This paper offers training on how to successfully write and submit scientific journals for the prospective authors. The training consisted of five interrelated and consecutive phases and they all were conducted in 20 weeks. The training phases in this paper are divided into three parts called ICE frameworks—Initial, Core, and Extensive. At the beginning, the training would be conducted in face-to-face meetings in two different areas. However, considering the current global pandemic that forces us to limit direct interaction, including face-to-face classroom, the training was conducted through an online platform. It employed Google Classroom and Google Meet since both platforms are available to be accessed by all participants; it is due to the popularity of Google

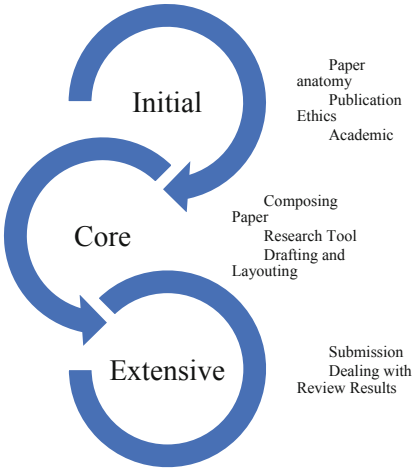

Fig. 1. The Framework of ICE (Initial, Core, Extensive)

Account owned by the participants. This training involved international students who enrolled in the universities around Malang. The participants' levels cover Undergraduate and Graduate Students. The following diagram presents the brief framework of training (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 Training Phases

To facilitate the prospective authors, to improve the quality of paper writing as well as comprehensive understanding about scholarly journals, we propose five phases of training which each of them is interrelated.

1. Initial Phase of Training
   During the initial phase of training, we tried to identify what are the common issues and challenges when writing for a scientific paper. We examined the most common challenges faced by the authors in general and tried to figure out how to answer the challenges through the next steps of training. In this phase, we also provide the prospective authors a theoretical knowledge and concept regarding journal and scientific paper. It consists of the comprehensive understanding about journals and the detail in the process of scientific paper writing such as: **paper anatomy**, **'dos' and 'don'ts' while writing paper**, **grammar of academic writing**, **previous research review, publication ethics, and how to find good reference.** Before the participants write their own draft, it is important to provide them an understanding of the aspects related to journal publication and scientific paper writing. To write a good paper which consists of significant novelty, the authors must understand what has been reported so far. Unfortunately, this understanding is often missing among them. When the participants have acquired sufficient understanding of journal and scientific paper writing, it is easy for them to draft their own paper [4]. After completing the

first phase, the participants were asked to prepare their writing based on their own interest.

2. Core Phase of Training
   The second phase of training is the first core training which allows the participants to obtain practical application of scientific paper writing. During the previous phase, the participants are asked to think up a particular topic and theme they are interested in. When attending the second phase of training, what has been prepared before is developed. In this phase, the participants are intensively coached by the editors who play a role as trainers. This phase is considered as the most crucial. This phase is considered as the most crucial stage since it deals with the core issues; how to compose readable and high-quality paper. This stage allows the participants to acquire comprehensively a practical understanding about how to compose proper titles for scientific journals, how to prepare a brief and suitable abstract which represents the entire paper, how to compose introduction parts and any other paper anatomy. In addition to paper anatomy writing, this phase also offers the participants to acquire skill and knowledge in utilizing some useful tools for research writing such as reference manager and plagiarism checker software.

   After the participants compose the draft of the paper in the second phase, by having intensive coaching from the editors, the paper is then edited and layouted to meet the technical requirements of the journal such as paper template and plagiarism level. This training allows the participants to take into account some important details which are required by the journal such as referencing style, tables and figures layout, essential title page information, and authors' details. These elements seem trivial. However, most authors often neglect to take into account the style and guidelines imposed by the journal. Accordingly, in the initial process of submission, the paper is often rejected by the editorial office and it is not directly proceeded to the peer-review process.
3. Extensive Phase of Training
   The following phase deals with the process of paper submission. When submitting papers to scholarly journals, the authors need to understand how the system of the journal works. Each journal employs a different system and platform starting from Open Journal System developed by Public Knowledge Project or commonly known as PKP to ScholarOne developed by Web of Science. Even some journals under Elsevier publisher have their own system and it is somehow different from one to another. It is undeniably that keeping up with the journal management system is a complicated and time-consuming task that the authors may neglect some of the stages while submitting the paper [14]. In this phase, the editors who play a role as trainers offer the participants an opportunity of dealing with journal management systems. This phase directs the participants to practice on some important elements such as user registration, metadata filling. These practices are essential for the authors since in the current trend of paper submission, almost all journals require them to submit through their system. Last but not least is dealing with the review results. Review results are one vital element during the process of paper submission. It is undeniably that reviewers have set and determined the standard regarding the paper sent to the journals. Regrettably, when the authors receive the review results from the reviewers (particularly when it requires major revision), the authors are unable to deal with it.

Consequently, they take longer time to revise. In the worst case, the authors decline the results and choose to submit to another journal—which may take them a longer process anyway. During this extensive phase, the editors who play a role as training instructors provide them practical understanding when the authors receive review results. It offers them how to pay attention to what aspect that may be taken when revising the paper according to the results.

2 Method

This research adopted a quasi-experimental design with non-equivalent control groups. This study included 30 graduate students who were required to publish their thesis work as a graduation requirement. The subjects were separated into two groups: 15 subjects in the control group and 15 subjects in the experimental group. Both groups were initially tasked with drafting a manuscript for publication. The papers were then evaluated based on their structure, language, and topic. The papers were assigned a score between 0 and 100. The score specifics are shown in Table 1. After producing the initial draft, the experimental group received training using the ICE training phase. In contrast, the control group received a typical lecture. Four weeks of training and lectures were provided (three sessions each week). In addition, the students were required to rewrite the paper draft. The corrected papers were then evaluated. After getting the grade for the revised papers, the grade was statistically assessed. Independent Samples t-Test was used to compare the means of two independent groups to evaluate whether there is statistical probability that the associated population means are significantly different.

Table 1. Score Given to Students' Paper

Score	Classification	Description
0–50	Poor	Poor Anatomy; Poor Language Quality; Lack of Elaboration; No Clear Novelty; Unclear Methodology; Outdated References; Insufficient Discussion
51–74	Sufficient	Sufficient Anatomy, Some Major Grammatical Issues in Language Quality; Sufficient Elaboration; Sufficient Research Gap but Not Explained Well; Sufficient Methodology; Sufficient References, Sufficient Discussion
75–80	Good	Good Anatomy, Some Minor Grammatical Issues in Language Quality; Good Elaboration; Good Research Gap but Need More Explanation; Sufficient Methodology; Sufficient References, Sufficient Discussion
81–100	Excellent	Good Anatomy, Very Minor Grammatical Issues in Language Quality; Excellent Elaboration; Clear Research Gap; Clear Methodology; Proper References, Proper Discussion

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Students' Perception on the Difficulties of Scholarly Publication

Before carrying out the training phase to the students, we collected the perception of students regarding the difficulties in doing publication in journals. Table 2 illustrates the responses given by students.

The participants answered 23 questions about the difficulty when doing scholarly publication. Most participants considered that they found it difficult when doing scholarly publication in a journal. Based on the responses gathered, it could be discussed that the participants find it difficult when complying with the demand given by the reviewers (100% participants). Then, most participants (93.33%) also could not fulfill the basic demand provided by journal editors when submitting their manuscript. What is interesting was the participants frequently chose the wrong journals as their platform to conduct scholarly publication (93.33%). In terms of paper writing, most participants considered that they were unable to compose good writing for publication. This is consistent with Shortlidge and Eddy (2018) which argue that PhD students mostly suffer in research communication or publication when they have not sufficiently invested their time for preparation. It further implies that when composing a manuscript for scholarly publication, preparation plays a significant role. The preparations required by the students or academicians are not only in terms of time in structuring the paper in a proper manner. Yet, the authors need to invest more on understanding how the scholarly publication works.

3.2 Students' Improvement on Writing Quality Through the Application of ICE Training Framework

In this study, the subjects were initially asked to compose a draft of the manuscript. The subjects were given a week to compose their draft. After the draft was ready, it was submitted and assessed. Then, the subjects were divided into two groups randomly; control and experimental groups. The control group was given a conventional lecturing session about research publication within four weeks. While the experimental group was given a training session by employing ICE training frameworks within four weeks consisting of Initial, Core, and Extensive phases. The highest score of the draft paper from the experimental group was 70 and the lowest was 55. While the highest score of the control group was 65 and the lowest was 50 (see Table 2). According to the assessment of the initial draft, both groups were classified as sufficient where most of the drafts were having sufficient paper anatomy, some major grammatical issues and language structure. Some of the drafts were sufficiently elaborated and some were not even ready to be published. Thus, based on the overall classification, the drafts of paper were not publishable.

Next, the subjects were given a treatment before revising their draft. The control group was given a conventional lecture while the experimental group was given a training session with the ICE training framework. After the lecturing and training session was completed, the subjects were asked to revise their draft. Then, the revised drafts were assessed. The highest score of the revised draft from the experimental group was 86

Table 2. Students' Perception on The Difficulties in Scholarly Publication

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1	It is difficult to use proper English grammar for academic writing	73,33	26,67	0,00	0,00
2	I frequently make errors in using proper English grammar for academic writing	66,67	33,33	0,00	0,00
3	It is difficult to find related articles to compose citations for my paper	60,00	40,00	0,00	0,00
4	It is difficult to compose proper citation and referencing for my paper	80,00	20,00	0,00	0,00
5	When composing citations, it is difficult to find proper guidance book	53,33	46,67	0,00	0,00
6	**It is difficult to organize and structure my ideas/arguments in a paragraph**	**86,67**	**13,33**	**0,00**	**0,00**
7	**It is difficult to connect one idea to another within one paragraph or between paragraphs**	**86,67**	**13,33**	**0,00**	**0,00**
8	**It is difficult to draft the paper in an order and clear structure**	**93,33**	**6,67**	**0,00**	**0,00**
9	**It is hard to write analytically (involving cause-effect, comparison, and pro-cons)**	**86,67**	**13,33**	**0,00**	**0,00**
10	It is difficult to choose proper words, collocation, and specific terminology for my writing	80,00	20,00	0,00	0,00
11	It is difficult to compose a paper draft that sufficiently convey my findings on certain research	73,33	26,67	0,00	0,00
12	**It is difficult to convey a novelty within my current draft**	**93,33**	**6,67**	**0,00**	**0,00**
13	**It is difficult to explain a research gap that I found when doing a literature review**	**93,33**	**6,67**	**0,00**	**0,00**
14	It is difficult to connect the previous research gap to my draft	80,00	20,00	0,00	0,00
15	It is difficult to grasp a comprehensive understanding about the previous researchers' ideas in the paper	66,67	33,33	0,00	0,00
16	It is difficult to frame my own research	60,00	40,00	0,00	0,00
17	**It is difficult to meet the demand of the reviewers when dealing with the peer-review process**	**100,00**	**0,00**	**0,00**	**0,00**
18	It is difficult to understand the 'Author's Guidelines' of the journal	53,33	46,67	0,00	0,00
19	**When submitting my manuscript, I frequently chose the wrong journals**	**93,33**	**6,67**	**0,00**	**0,00**

(*continued*)

Table 2. (*continued*)

No	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
20	I find it difficult understanding ethical guidance of certain journals	46,67	53,33	0,00	0,00
21	I find it difficult understanding the submission system of the journals	60,00	40,00	0,00	0,00
22	I tend to send my manuscript to the journals through email	80,00	20,00	0,00	0,00
23	**I rarely meet the basic demand provided by journals editor when submitting my manuscript**	**93,33**	**6,67**	**0,00**	**0,00**

* SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Initial_Draft Experiment	15	55	70	61.13	4.969
Revised_Draft Experiment	15	75	86	79.47	3.623
Initial_Draft Control	15	50	65	56.87	4.357
Revised_Draft Control	15	60	70	65.73	3.535
Valid N (listwise)	15				

and the lowest was 75 (See Table 3). The highest score of the revised draft from the control group was 70 and the lowest was 60 (See Table 3). Based on the score on the revised manuscripts, most papers in the experimental group were classified as Good and Excellent. While most papers in the control group remained classified as Sufficient.

After obtaining the score from the initial drafts and the revised drafts, then it was performed a normality testing to identify whether the data obtained is normally distributed. It employed Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality testing. According to the following Table 4, the sig. Value is greater than 0.05. It further indicates that the data was normally distributed.

Furthermore, the Independent Sample t-Test was performed to discover whether there is a significant difference between the experimental and control group. It aims at identifying whether the developed training phase ICE provides significant improvement on the quality of students' paper. The following Table 5 illustrates the results of Independent Sample t-Test.

According to Table 5, the improvement of students' paper quality, which is expressed by standard gain, obtained a F value of 0.15 with significance value of 0.904. The significance value of 0.904 which is greater than 0.05 further expresses that the variance of results between the experimental and control group is homogenous. Thus, in this study we took equal variances assumed classification.

Then, according to the Table 5, Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.000. The result is less than 0.005, then, the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically difference between

Table 4. Normality Testing Results

	Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Outcomes	Initial_Draft Experiment	.136	15	.200*
	Revised_Draft Experiment	.152	15	.200*
	Initial_Draft Control	.134	15	.200*
	Revised_Draft Control	.173	15	.200*

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Table 5. Independent Sample t-Test Result

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Gain	Equal variances assumed	1,227	0,275	12,529	38	0,000	14,30000	1,14133	11,98950	16,61050
	Equal variances not assumed			12,529	37,242	0,000	14,30000	1,14133	11,98796	16,61204

control and experimental group is rejected. As a result, the training phase given to the experiment offers significant improvement to the training participants.

4 Concluding Remarks

In the current academic discourse, publishing academic papers to journals is substantial, particularly for those engaged in academic institutions (lecturers, experts, and/or college students) to disseminate the results and ideas. The process of publishing papers in academic journals has shifted into a more complex and demanding process. However, most of those engaging in academic discourse do not pay solemn attention solemnly to every single process they need to take—from paper composition to paper submission. Most editors received what-so-called 'unsuitable' submissions. On that account, this paper offers a set of training phases to facilitate the prospective authors before they submit their research results to the journals. This paper offers three interconnected phases which are divisible. This paper suggests **ICE** training framework for the authors consisting of Initial, Core, and Extensive training phases to overcome common issues that might be encountered by the authors while submitting their paper to the journals.

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