Bielefeld University Welcome Center
Academics in Sub-Saharan Africa
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The dos and the don'ts of submission to a journal
Hints for young researchers

Kurt Salentin

International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)
Focus of this presentation

- Young researchers are young authors
- Publish or perish
- Priority to peer-reviewed journal articles
- Some rules of scientific communication
- What journal reviewers pay attention to
- Frequent problems
- What you can do to improve your papers
Scientific communication: How to address your audience

• Make explicit why your contribution matters. This is less obvious to the reader than to yourself.

• Locate your contribution in an on-going conversation or dispute.

• Be familiar with relevant literature.

• What is the problem that you solve? Choose a clear focus!

• Refer to open questions

• State which innovation your paper provides
Adhere to rules of scientific communication

• Explain comprehensibly how you arrive at your findings

• No frills, no detours:
  Make sure everything you write contributes to the core argument

• Convince the audience you know more than them and they can learn something from you.

• Know what can be taken for granted (theories, methods, findings).

• Do no bother readers with commonplaces.

• Know the journal to which you submit:
  study its scope, tradition, and formal requirements
International Journal of Conflict and Violence - ijcv.org

- founded in 2007
- independent
- peer reviewed
- included in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)
- true open access, no authors’ fees
- authors from 50+ countries
IJCV review criteria: grounds for approval or rejection

Manuscript Evaluation Form for reviewers:

Assessment

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<th>Poor</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pertinence to the Focus of the Journal</td>
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<td>Importance of Findings (Is the ‘value added’ significant?)</td>
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<td>Adequacy of Literature Review</td>
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<td>Methodological Adequacy</td>
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<td>Clarity of Presentation (concepts, clarity of objections, organisation of the manuscript)</td>
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<td>Validity of Conclusion</td>
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Overall Recommendation

- Accepted for publication without any revision
- Accepted for publication pending minor revision (as explained below)
- Conditionally recommended, but close revision and resubmission necessary
- Not acceptable, for reasons given below
IJCV review criteria

• Pertinence to the focus of IJCV

• Importance of findings:
  Is there a significant contribution to knowledge?

• Adequacy of literature review

• Methodological adequacy

• Clarity of presentation:
  concepts, objectives, argumentation, organisation of manuscript

• Validity of conclusions
IJCV manuscript rejections

- 50-80% of all submissions rejected
- higher risk for
  - young researchers
  - authors from the Global South
Frequent problems (1)

**no access to scientific resources**
- no access to costly books and journals
- popular vs. scholarly literature
- grey literature
- outdated literature
- local/national literature only
Consequences of deficient literature review

• Readers will not expect you contribute anything knew if you are unaware of the old.

• Scientific communication tolerates no national borders.

• Reviewers will consider you an amateur or a newbie from which the reader cannot learn anything.

• Reviewers are adamant: They either not aware of access problems or they consider it "no excuse".
Frequent problems (2)

Lack of resources for primary research

- Desk research cannot substitute fresh evidence
- Value added by desk research is difficult to show
- Dedicated review articles are possible but demand absolute state of the art knowledge including long term trends
Frequent problems (3)

Disregard of rules of communication

- Promises not kept (title, introduction, abstract)
- Answer questions you have not asked in the introduction
- No clear focus (giant slalom problem)
- Re-discover what readers already know
- Conclusions not backed by evidence
- Opinion instead of facts
Frequent problems (3):

Disregard of formal requirements

• manuscript too long
• manuscript not anonymous
• citation style does not comply
• footnotes/endnotes not as expected
• etc.
Miscellaneous Hints

- Develop your article with an experienced mentor
- Consider co-authorship for your first attempts
- "Internal review": Listen to peers' critique before submission
- Rewrite comprehensively if necessary

Before submission:

- Carefully read author guidelines of each journal you consider
- Observe size limits and formal stipulations
- Let a native speaker check your language
Keep in mind:

- Rejection is a normal thing
- Happens to big shots, too
- At second glance reviewers' critique is justified more often than not
- Learn from rejections
- Revise and try again!
Thank your for your attention.

Kurt Salentin - ijcv@uni-bielefeld.de