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Dealing with journal review results: How successful and productive authors avoid and respond to manuscript rejections

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Abstract

Both early-career writers and authors with more experience may get rejected when they submit a manuscript to a distinguished or high impact journal; however, different authors may respond to rejections differently and this will determine whether or not an author is successful and publish a lot of articles in good journals. This study is aimed at investigating how productive authors react to article rejections they obtain from journal editors. This study used a qualitative approach and inductive coding data analysis techniques and processes were used to examine the data from semi-structured interview. Ten productive authors in the field of education from Malaysia and Indonesia were interviewed using a semi-structured interview to get the data. The results show that: 1) when responding to a rejection, most authors revised their manuscripts following editor or reviewers' comments and corrections before submitting it to another journal with a lower ranking or Quartile value, 2) the major factor causing a rejection according to the respondents is a manuscript which is very similar or a duplicate of an already published one, and 3) the major factor causing a rejection according to the respondents is a manuscript which is very similar or a duplicate of an already published one.. Thus, productive authors keep writing although their manuscripts often got rejected by journals because authors learn from comments and corrections from editors and/or reviewers. Novice authors should not give up writing and revising their manuscripts although they often experience rejections from journals' reviewers and/or editors.

Keywords: *dealing with rejections; journal articles; manuscript rejection; productive authors; successful authors*

INTRODUCTION

In academic atmosphere, we often hear a very common saying stressing the necessity to publish by faculty members 'publish or perish'; this places extreme pressure on academics to publish in order to go higher on their academic career level, obtain recognition in their field, and be eligible for multiple scholarships, research funds, and incentives (Jayadinata, et.al., 2022 & Tewari, 2022). In the Indonesian context, this pressure is not only experienced by university teaching

staff or lecturers but also by postgraduate students since they also must publish their or dissertations in a reputable local or foreign journal. According to Tewari, at research universities, this burden could be greater, particularly for younger faculty members and postgraduate students willing to advance in their careers. For example, a faculty member cannot be promoted to a higher level of their career path without having their works published in eminent local or foreign journals and a postgraduate student cannot proceed to the thesis or dissertation exam if they have not published their research in a prominent journal.

Academics experience a culture of rejection since their grant money, career prospects, and even the profitability of the universities where they work are all heavily dependent on their publication history (Teixeira da Silva & Nazarovets, 2025 and Wooley & Barron, 2009). Between 50 and 90 percent of manuscripts submitted for publication in high impact journals are rejected; this is a high but steady percentage (Woolley & Barron, 2009). It is arguable that utilizing such a dichotomous conclusion to evaluate a scholar's work, highly weighted in the negative, creates a counterproductive, even poisonous, culture that is detrimental to the overall objectives of academia (Morrish, 2019 & Weare, 2019). According to Paltridge (2017), any result other than rejection is a success. If an editor has requested authors to make revisions, it is most likely that they want to publish the article. A paper would have been rejected if the journal was not interested in publishing it.

Academic staff members are consistently evaluated and promoted by colleges and universities depending on their number of publications (Fathelrahman, 2015), while rejection of a manuscript may be upsetting and disheartening, especially if it happens again and again. Article rejection poses a significant obstacle especially for junior employees to advancement and career development, especially given that rejection rates for high impact journals can be very high. A researchers who seeks publication in high impact publications may take several years to publish only a portion of his results. This has caused many academics and researchers to publish their work in local or regional and low impact journals.

Literature review

Authors have tried to find the causes of article draft rejection in the several different fields of journals. According to Ehara and Takahashi (2007) and Patel (2022), frequently cited factors for manuscript rejections consist of: 1) insufficient significance and pertinence of the topic; 2) inconsistency in research design, outcomes, and conclusions; 3) lack of novelty; and 4) improper, dubious, or defective technical methods. Syah (2020) adds that 'the single most important factor on the part of authors is failure to read and follow the instructions to authors while 'dressing' the manuscript for the target journal' (p.2). Syah further asserts that initial impressions matter and writers should carefully craft their papers to portray their findings in the most favorable light while adhering to the journal guidelines. Fathelrahman (2015) suggests that investigating this issue or writing about it would help novice authors or new researchers who pursue publishing their data but experience difficulties to solve the problems of rejection and getting their work published within an expected schedule. Also, accepting that manuscript rejection is a common occurrence would help relieve the symptoms of frustration and reduce feelings of disappointment.

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If an article draft is rejected by a journal and then a significant change in the manuscript has to be made in order not to get a rejection again. Fathelrahman (2015) claims that frequent rejections of a particular manuscript happens when an author keeps resubmitting it to several journals as it was written firstly and without making any significant effort to modify it. Also, According to Fathelrahman, the data becomes outdated when a manuscript is rejected multiple times giving reviewers and editors another justification for rejecting it. This is particularly true for survey-based studies, however it might not apply to laboratory-based ones where the data can be published whenever there is a market for it.

Not all rejected manuscripts are of low in quality; some of them are good enough to be published in a journal. According to Woolley & Barron (2009), a half of rejected manuscripts are finally published in a journal within two years after they were rejected. Prathap et al. (2019) suggests that published articles with a history of rejection received more citations than those without such a history. This supports the idea that many articles that were rejected by a journal were genuinely of high quality or had the potential to be so. So, the question is why some excellent articles being rejected. According to Prathap et al., the rejection of excellent work may be influenced by other causes, such as plagiarism, insufficient data, insufficient problem statement, outside the journal scope, biased data, repeated or not an original study, and so on.

One of the few empirical studies on the issue of manuscript rejection was conducted by Belcher (2009) when she looked at both supportive and critical comments on papers that were approved and rejected. She discovered that the most often mentioned reasons of rejected papers were the audience, purpose/problem statement/research questions, literature review, methodologies, presentation and analysis of data, discussion/significance, educational implications, language use/style, and theme of the paper. In Belcher's study, the topic of the paper received the most favorable feedback, whereas language use and style received the most negative feedback. However, according to Belcher the majority of comments were more critical than supportive. Similarly, Menon et al., (2022) discovered that lack of originality, being beyond the scope of the journal, improper study designs, inadequate methodological details, poor writing quality, and insufficient study justification are the most frequent reasons for desk rejection while poor technique and shoddy papers were other factors in rejections from the reviewers. Therefore, Menon et al. advise writers to discuss in details their conceptualization, design, and presentation of their study prevent rejection and improve their manuscript's chances of publishing.

A more recent study was conducted by Adib & Nimehchisalem (2021) when they found that the main causes of manuscript rejection at the preview stage were issues with originality, poor language, small scope, wrong format, and poor organization, while at the review stage were issues with methodology, organization, language, insignificance, and literature review. According to Adib & Nimehchisalem, there are a few less frequent causes as well, such as conventionally vague and thin research results, brief analyses, scant conclusions, and irrelevant, out-of-date, and impactless references. Adib & Nimehchisalem indicate that these problems are, of course, fixable, and

upcoming writers are strongly advised to be aware of the possible causes for manuscript rejections and use them as a guide to enhance the quality of their submissions so that they will have a better chance of being accepted.

As presented above, previous studies on manuscript rejections mainly investigated the possible causes of papers rejected by journals and how to avoid them while none of them scrutinized how authors respond to and follow on manuscript rejections. This is important because, according to Belcher (2019:22), 'successful academic writers persist despite rejection'. In other words, although their works are often rejected, productive and successful authors do not give up writing and do something with their rejected manuscripts. However, the way authors respond to and follow up manuscript rejections can be different from one author to the others. This is why this study is necessary; that is to investigate how productive academic authors respond to paper rejections. As a guideline, the following questions are asked in this study.

- 1). How do productive and successful authors avoid manuscript rejections?
- 2). How do productive and successful authors respond to manuscript rejections? and
- 3). What factors often cause manuscript rejections according to the productive and successful authors?

METHOD

In order to evaluate how successful and productive authors react to submission rejections, the qualitative method was used in this study. This major goal of this study was to get a deeper understanding of why certain authors continue to produce work in the face of rejection from journal editors and/or reviewers, whilst other authors may have given up on their writing careers. According to Mirhosseini (2020), qualitative research seeks to communicate experience as it is actually felt, as opposed to how it is interpreted, and does this through a unique way of considering qualitative data. It calls for a profound awareness of attunement to the experience of being in the world in all its mundane yet complex everydayness.

The subjects of the study

Authors who have published at least ten articles in prominent international journals (e.g., journals indexed by Scopus and/or World of Science) across a range of disciplines were chosen as the subjects for this study. Five productive Indonesian authors who are professors at a government university in Indonesia and five productive authors from University Malaya took part in the study. Indonesian authors represent English as a Foreign language speakers or EFL while Malaysian authors represent English as a Second language speakers or ESL. First, a zoom discussion on the study's outlined objectives was conducted to the selected writers. The next stage was to ask them to react to a WhatsApp message asking whether or not they would be ready to take part in the study as a respondent. After the data were collected and analyzed, a focus group discussion was held with the Indonesian and Malaysian authors to validate the data and gather more information about the topic.

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Research instrument

This study is to learn more about potential responses and follow up actions of successful authors to manuscript rejections they obtained. The interview was conducted in Indonesian to make the participants feel more at ease and free to share their thoughts and feelings. Prior to asking them questions in a semi-structured manner, we urged them to share their feelings over manuscript rejection. The participants were then asked about how they handle manuscript rejections and why they continue to be productive even after receiving negative feedback from journal editors and/or reviewers.

Data collection procedure

The participants were contacted via WhatsApp and informed that participation in the research was entirely optional and that all interviews would be conducted in Indonesian, recorded, and transcribed for research purposes. This information was made clear during the initial conversation with the participants. They were given assurances that any information gathered about them would be kept completely private and would not have an impact on how they are evaluated on their work performance. All of the respondents gave their consent before the study started. The interviews took place in the researcher's office between September 3 and October 3, 2022, and each one lasted around 30 minutes.

Data analysis technique

The interview data were examined and evaluated utilizing inductive coding data analysis methodologies and procedures following Tekir (2021). We listened to the interview audio recordings and took notes. After analyzing all of the transcripts, the first codes were created using the raw data generated from the respondents' experiences with manuscript rejection, with a focus based on the research questions. A list of these codes was then created. After carefully examining the codes and the data, the researcher made a selection of labels and sub-labels that were more inclusive. As a result, the themes that influenced the study's outcomes may be found and discussed. The freshly developed categories were utilized to explain the phenomenon that was being studied.

Trustworthiness

In order to assure authenticity and lessen the subjectivity of the study because it is a subjective experience that differs from person to person, member verification was employed in this study. The interview transcriptions were forwarded to the participants for review in order to reduce the possibility of misunderstandings and errors. A member check does not always produce unanimity; we should prepare for contradictory reactions if we strike a nerve and reveal facts that participants would have preferred to keep hidden. We learned more about the participants' own social and cultural structure from their responses. No changes were necessary for any of the 10 people in this research who answered the interview question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

From the interview, it was found that all productive authors published at least one article in a reputable foreign journal every year in the last five years either as a main author or other authors. They also often experienced rejection to their manuscripts after being submitted to a targeted international but it does not stop them from revising and submitting the manuscript again to another prominent international journal. It was also found that the authors chose high impact journals (journals indexed by Scopus and/or Web of Science with quartile value of 1 or 2) to submit their manuscript for the first time and then submitted it again to the same or lower quartile value journals after revision if it gets rejection. They also reported that they never submit a manuscript to the same journal after being rejected by the journal because the chance to be accepted is very small.

Avoiding manuscript rejection

Six themes emerged from the respondents' answers in the interviews on how productive and successful authors avoid manuscript rejections: these are 1) following authors' guideline, 2) ensuring enough and up-to-dated references to cite, asking other authors to review and edit the manuscripts, 3) ensuring that the research results have some kind of novelty, 4) making sure that the manuscripts have been free from grammatical and lexical errors, 5) ensuring that the article contains a novelty and 6) making sure that the manuscript matches the journal mission and theme. These themes were obtained from the frequent answers given by the respondents.

Theme 1: following authors' guidelines of the targeted journal

The respondent authors stated that they always study the authors' guidelines of the targeted journal found in the journal website including using the suggested article template if available to prepare their manuscript. One of the respondents from Indonesia stated as follows:

In editing and revising my manuscript, I always read and follow the journal guidelines for authors, such as how to write the title, how long the abstract should be, how to write the authors' names and affiliation, how to cite references, and how to write the bibliography.

Theme 2: ensuring enough references cited in the article draft as recommended in the journal author guidelines.

The authors also mentioned that they used enough recent references to cite in the article draft in an attempt to minimize the rejection possibility and increase the chance of acceptability. The authors from Indonesian and Malaysia said the following that,

The references used in the manuscript must be up to date; the number of references is at least 30, the more references cited in the article is the better.

The bibliography must be written following the examples in the already published articles in the targeted journal.

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Theme 3: asking other authors to review and edit their manuscript before submission.

The productive authors also often asked other experienced authors to review and edit their manuscript before submitting it to a prominent international journal. One of the respondents from Indonesia said that,

I often had discussion with other authors or a mentor about my article draft to know if they have any comments, corrections and recommendations to help me revise my manuscript.

Since my English is not good enough, I often asked an English lecturer to correct the grammar and vocabulary choice in my article draft or used a professional proofreader either a native English speaker or nonnative English speaker to minimize the language errors in the article draft.

Theme 4: ensuring the article draft matches the mission and theme of the targeted journal

Another way of the productive authors in avoiding quick rejection from a targeted journal is to choose a journal which has the same mission and theme with the article draft. One of the authors from Malaysia stated that,

The article draft must be suitable with the journal mission, theme and field. We can look at the examples of already published articles in the same journal to follow.

Theme 5: ensuring a novelty occurs in the article

The article draft must contain new information or novelty so that it is attractive to readers. An article containing old information will not give new knowledge to readers and therefore, journal editors and reviewers will surely reject it. The productive authors from Malaysia and Indonesia said that,

A research article must contain a novelty or new information from the research results from which the article draft was written.

An article contains no novelty will not attract readers including journal editor and reviewers to read it.

Theme 6: checking the similarity index of the manuscript

The last common practice of the authors in preparing their manuscript before submitting it to a targeted journal is to check the level of its similarity using Turnitin plagiarism checker application. This is to ensure that the article draft is original and is not a duplicate of any other published articles or materials. One of the authors from Malaysia mentioned that,

I always checked the similarity index score of my manuscript using Turnitin application to make sure that my manuscript is free from any kind of plagiarism acts.

Different journals may require different levels of similarity index of a manuscript to be accepted for further processes.

Responding to manuscript rejection

The second question asked to the respondent authors in the interview was about how they respond to rejection from a journal editor and/or reviewers. From their answers, three themes emerged; these are 1) revising the manuscript following the editor's and/or reviewers' recommendations, 2) submitting the manuscript to another journal with the same or lower impact factor or quartile value, and 3) submitting the manuscript to a journal with more suitable mission and/or theme.

Theme 1: revising the article draft following the editor and/or reviewers' recommendations

The most common practice by the productive authors in responding to a manuscript rejection is that they revise their article drafts following comments, questions and suggestions from the reviewer. The respondents from Malaysia and Indonesia said that,

I always revise my manuscript responding to every corrections and recommendations from the editors and/or reviewers.

I often changed the title of my article to be more attractive to readers before submitting it again to another journal.

Theme 2: submitting the manuscript to another journal with the same or lower quartile

The second common practice by the respondents in responding to manuscript rejection after revision is to submit their manuscript to another journal with the same or lower impact factor or quartile. The respondents from Malaysia and Indonesia reported that,

I always revise my article draft and submit it to a different journal with the same or lower impact factor or quartile.

If submitting a rejected manuscript to the same journal, the chance to be reviewed and accepted is very small.

I never give up revising my manuscript to be submitted to another journal if it gets rejected.

Theme 3: submitting the manuscript to a journal with an unsuitable mission and/or theme

The last common practice by the productive authors in responding to manuscript rejection is to submit the same manuscript to another journal with more suitable mission and theme. One the authors from Indonesia mentioned that,

I often got rejection from a journal because the content of my article does not match the journal mission and theme.

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Potential factors causing a manuscript rejection

The last question asked to the productive authors is about the potential causes of a manuscript rejected by a journal. From their answers, three themes emerged; these are 1) an article is a duplicate of a published article or there is no novelty in it, 2) the manuscript contains a lot of spelling, grammar and lexical errors, and 3) the article does not match the journal's mission and theme.

Theme 1: the article draft is a duplicate of an already published one
A manuscript can be quickly rejected by a journal because it has a high similarity index. One of the respondents from Indonesia reported that,

An article is rejected because the journal editor in chief found that the article is just a duplicate the content of a previous study or there is no novelty in the article.

Theme 2: the manuscript contains a lot of language errors
Another possible reason for a manuscript to be easily rejected by a journal is because it contains a lot of language errors, such grammar errors, vocabulary errors, organization errors and so on. One of the authors from Indonesia mentioned that,

In my experience, my manuscript is often full of grammar and lexical errors because I am not very fluent in writing in English. Therefore, I often asked someone with good at writing English to edit or correct my article draft before submitting the article to a journal.

Theme 3: the article does not match the journal's mission and theme.
The last possible reason for a manuscript to get an instant rejection according to the authors is because the theme of the article does not match the theme and mission of the journal. One of the respondents from Indonesia said,

If the content of the article does not match the mission and theme of the journal, it will be quickly rejected. Therefore, we have to study the field, mission and theme of the targeted journal.

Discussion

The first objective in this study is to find out how productive and successful authors avoid manuscript rejections and the majority of respondents reported the importance of following the authors' guidelines of the targeted journal. They stressed the significance of thoroughly studying and adhering to the guidelines provided by the journal. This involved utilizing suggested article templates, if available, to structure their manuscripts. By following the guidelines, authors aimed to ensure that their manuscripts met the journal's specific requirements, including formatting, citation style, and length restrictions. This attention to detail demonstrated the authors' commitment to submitting a manuscript that aligned with the expectations of the targeted journal. This is probably because journals encourage authors to follow the guidelines because they help ensure that a study is described in enough detail for evaluation by editors, reviewers and readers (Heseltine, 2015; Chiheb & Boukezzoula, 2024). According to Heseltine, this aids readers with finding the information they want and helps writers remember what details to add and in what sequence.

The second theme emerging from the interview is emphasizing the value of seeking input from other authors for manuscript review and editing. Productive authors recognized the benefits of engaging in discussions with experienced authors, peers, or mentors to receive feedback and recommendations. By involving others in the review and editing process, authors aimed to identify areas for improvement, address any weaknesses or errors in their manuscripts, and enhance the overall quality of their work. Authors also highlighted the importance of seeking language assistance, particularly from English lecturers or professional proofreaders, to minimize language errors and ensure clarity in their article drafts. Peer review is the procedure whereby scholars, researchers, or thinkers in the same area evaluate each other's work. Its purpose is to prevent the publication of unfounded claims, inappropriate interpretations, or personal opinions without first undergoing professional evaluation. It also serves to motivate writers to adhere to the high standards recognized in their field. Thus, through peer review authors help each other improve the quality of their manuscript and make it more acceptable for publication.

The third theme highlighted the significance of aligning the manuscript with the journal's missions and themes. Authors acknowledged the importance of selecting a journal that closely matched the scope and subject matter of their research. By reviewing previously published articles within the targeted journal, authors were able to ensure that their manuscripts were a suitable fit. This alignment increased the likelihood of acceptance, as it demonstrated the manuscript's relevance to the journal's audience and objectives. The last theme stressed the necessity of incorporating novelty in the article. Authors recognized that articles lacking novelty or new insights would be unappealing to journal editors and reviewers. To engage readers and increase the chances of acceptance, authors aimed to provide new information derived from their research results. By offering fresh perspectives or innovative approaches, authors aimed to contribute to the existing knowledge in their field and demonstrate the significance of their work. Ali (2010) suggests that, the journal editors always consider its breadth in relation to the journal; unless the submission is unusual, some journals will hunt for research on lead compounds rather than the current and well-established therapeutic molecules.

Nowadays, the number of submissions received by a leading journal in particular field may be well above 1000 manuscripts per year posing several challenges to journal editors and staff (Dantas-Torres, 2022) and of course they have to reject the majority of the manuscripts. One way of selecting which articles to be published is to choose those which present new information or novelty for readers. According to Dantas-Torres, some studies are well designed and conducted, but are limited in terms of novelty, and these studies will surely be rejected by high-ranking journals because the journal editors and reviewers will only publish articles which can provide new information for their readers. Similarly, Wagner and Mukhrejee (2018) claim that, although they are hard to measure, creativity and novelty are universally valued in scholarship. In other words, esteemed journals will only publish manuscript which can improve the knowledge of their potential readers and fill the gap in the literature.

A similar finding is reported by Menon et al. (2020) who found that, perceived lack of novelty or originality in the study issue was the most frequent

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fatal defect leading to manuscript rejection. According to Menon et al., there is undoubtedly some subjectivity involved in how editors and peer reviewers determine the manuscript's uniqueness or novelty but an easy method of doing this is by taking a published paper on the topic and look at authors' statement about the limitation/s of their study and use this as the rationale for a further study. In other words, a particular study can be done to fill in the gap left by previous studies reviewed in the article. By so doing, the current study will never duplicate already published words and positively produce a novelty.

The second question in this research is how productive and successful authors respond to manuscript rejections. The most common response was to revise the manuscript based on editor's and/or reviewers' recommendations. Authors recognized the value of carefully reviewing the comments and suggestions provided, addressing each comment and question raised, and incorporating the necessary revisions to improve their articles. Some authors even modified their article titles to enhance reader engagement before resubmitting to another journal, showcasing their adaptability and willingness to make necessary changes. Another response to manuscript rejection was to submit the revised manuscript to another journal of similar or lower impact. Authors emphasized the importance of persistence and acknowledged that resubmitting to the same journal after rejection often yielded limited chances of acceptance. By exploring alternative journals, authors aimed to increase their chances of publication while considering factors such as impact factors or quartile values that aligned with their research. Authors also considered submitting the manuscript to a journal with a more suitable mission and/or theme as a response to rejection. They recognized instances where rejection occurred due to a lack of congruence between the manuscript's content and the targeted journal's focus. By identifying journals that better aligned with their research, authors aimed to increase the chances of acceptance by submitting their work to a more appropriate publication venue.

In the past, authors often abandoned their manuscripts rejected by a journal but it is not a wise decision since the majority of authors also experience rejection in their academic writing career and this do not stop them from becoming successful and productive authors (Donovan, 2007 & Belcher, 2009). According to Belcher, if a manuscript is rejected by a journal authors should move on to revising the manuscript based on reviewers' comments and correction (if there are any) and finding a new journal to submit the revised manuscript. Thus, rejection will not stop successful or productive authors from revising their manuscripts and selecting another journal with higher or lower ranking to publish their articles.

The last research question is what factors that may cause a manuscript rejection and the productive authors reported that the main factor causing a manuscript to be rejected by a journal is when it has high similarity index or when it is a duplicate of an already published one. The second frequent cause of a manuscript rejection is when it is poorly written or when the manuscript is not in line with the mission and theme of the targeted journal. According to Belcher (2019), journal editors and readers will be interested in an article if it fills a gap, aids understanding, inspires debate, and fits a journal theme and if it fresh and different from specific articles and/or books already in print. In

other words, one criteria of an acceptable article is when it matches the theme of a journal to which the manuscript is submitted.

Overall, the findings from the interviews highlight the strategies employed by productive and successful authors to avoid manuscript rejection. By following journal guidelines, ensuring up-to-date references, seeking input from others, aligning their manuscripts with journal missions, incorporating novelty, and checking for similarity, authors increase the likelihood of acceptance. Additionally, authors' responses to rejection demonstrate their adaptability, persistence, and consideration of alternative publication venues. By employing these strategies and responses, authors can enhance the quality and acceptability of their manuscripts, ultimately increasing their chances of successful publication. This is a strategy some journals adopt to reduce the burden on journal staff, editors and reviewers; that is being more selective in deciding which manuscripts should actually be sent out for peer review (Dantas-Torres, 2022 & Wykes et al., 2024). In other words, rejecting a manuscript which does not comply with journal guidelines, themes and mission or of poor quality in terms of content and language will help reduce the workload of the journal editor, manager and administrative staffs.

A rather different finding is reported by Menon et al. (2022) who found that a common reason for rejection included poor research methodology described and discussed by the authors in the manuscript. According to Menon et al., inadequate method elaboration was one of the most frequent cited causing for manuscript rejection after peer reviews. This is because, as Sa & Serpa (2020) suggest, any scientific investigation consists of two parts: the process and the product; while the product focuses on the outcomes of the process, the process deals with the strategies employed by the researchers to address the research topic of interest. Thus, the acceptability of the product depends very much on the acceptability of the process. In other words, if the process is not well and convincingly addressed in the article method section and the product or the research results may not be trusted and accepted by the journal editors and reviewers. Similarly, Dantas-Torres (2022) suggests that a research design or methodology that is unsuitable for answering a hypothesis, such as a limited sample size, improper controls, randomization, or outdated methodology that has been superseded by more potent techniques that might yield more reliable results, could lead to the rejection of an article.

CONCLUSION

It may be inferred from the findings and discussion that 1) all authors reported that they published at least one article every year although they often experienced rejection from a high-impact journal, 2) the majority of them read and complied with author guidelines suggested by the targeted journal to avoid rejection from the targeted journal; 3) when responding to a rejection, most authors revised their manuscripts following editor or reviewers' comments and corrections before submitting it to another journal with a lower ranking or Quartile value, and 4) the major factor causing a rejection according to the respondents is a manuscript which is very similar or a duplicate of an already published one. Thus, productive authors keep writing although their

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manuscripts often got rejected by journals because authors learn from comments and corrections from editors and/or reviewers to make their manuscripts better and acceptable.

This study is not without limitation; only ten productive authors from Indonesia and Malaysia were included in this study. This is of course far from sufficient. Therefore, next study on the same topic should involve more respondents in the study and the research instruments should combine a questionnaire and an in-depth interview to get more comprehensive data. This is for the purpose of obtaining more comprehensive information on how productive authors keep publishing although they often experience rejection from international reputable journals. Another purpose is to get more data on how successful authors prepare their manuscripts before submitting it to a targeted journal so that they are successful in getting at least one article a year.

The findings of this study have some implications particularly for novice authors and postgraduate students in writing journal article drafts to be submitted to a well-known journal. First, since the majority of prominent author also experience rejection, new authors should not stop revising their manuscripts after being rejected by a journal. Second, to reduce the possibility of rejection, authors should comply with all rules and regulation enforced by a targeted journal as stated in the journal guidelines for authors. This is because, high-impact journals reject up to nine out of ten or 90% manuscripts submitted to the journals and the majority of them get rejected by the journal editors before they were sent to reviewers (Tewari, 2022). Finally, young authors should become active members of a particular discourse community to be familiar with the discourse features and style of the discourse to be able to produce a better manuscript or at least of similar quality.

AUTHOR STATEMENTS

Safnil Arsyad conducted the initial steps of the research; these include writing the research proposal, collecting and analyzing the data, and writing the first drafts of the manuscript. Muhammad Zaim and Juliana Othman helped editing the article drafts, revising the manuscripts following reviewers' comments and corrections and ensuring the article follow the journal format and template.

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