

GILE Journal of Skills Development

Research Writing, Peer Review and Academic Publishing: Benefits of Individual, Institutional and Journal Mentoring

Ponn P. Mahayosnand

Ronin Institute, USA

 ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8979-2806>

Abstract

Writing academic research papers acceptable for journal publication is not often taught in graduate programs let alone in undergraduate studies. Students and early career researchers (herein known as students for both categories) usually undergo a trial-and-error period to learn how to navigate the publication submission process—a long and daunting task. However, E-mentoring, or electronic mentoring, has proven to be beneficial for students. E-mentoring opportunities can be found by a pro-active student seeking out published researchers in their fields and requesting if they can mentor them. Colleges, universities or other academic institutions may have formal or informal research or peer review programmes, internship, field experience or practicum courses for-credit. Academic journals may also host student mentoring programmes for peer review, editing, and/or research writing hands-on experiences.

Mentoring students in research writing and the journal publication process should start as early in one's academic career as possible. Age or academic status should not be seen as a deterrent or disadvantage when mentored by a patient, experienced and enthusiastic research mentor. Such e-mentoring experiences can be offered by individual researchers, at the institutional level or from the academic journal—the latter being the most ideal model worthy of advocacy and replication.

Keywords/key phrases: academic publishing, research writing, peer review, student, e-mentoring, early career researcher

1. Introduction

Writing academic research papers acceptable for journal publication is not often taught in graduate programmes, let alone in undergraduate studies (Baird, 2021; Kane, 2022). Junior scientists have reported being “abandoned” by their academic supervisor or advisor (herein known as advisor) (Li, 2019). When rare feedback is given, it was often delayed, too vague, or differed greatly from the student's perspective leaving, the student discombobulated. Students were typically left confused after completing their master's thesis or doctoral dissertation

(Kane, 2022). Students reported having been left in the dark and were left to navigate the publication process through trial and error (Li, 2019).

2. Benefits of Research E-Mentors

Individual research mentors working remotely, or within a research collective, group or institutional setting, and/or a part of a formal academic journal mentoring programme can positively influence students in academic publishing (Donald, 2023; Mahayosnand et al., 2021; Mahayosnand & Bermejo, 2022). However, to develop a successful mentor-mentee relationship, there is a need for quality mentors experienced in the need(s) of the mentee, in this case: research writing and academic publishing (Donald, 2023; Mahayosnand et al., 2021, 2021; Zografou & McDermott, 2022). This section shares some successful academic publishing mentor-mentee programmes.

2.1. Individual Research E-Mentors

Finding individual mentors involves self-confidence, creativity and diligence. A student may search social networks like LinkedIn for like-minded professionals who have their desired experience (Ely, 2021). Then, the student would have to pitch themselves to see if they or any of their colleagues are interested in mentoring a student (Ely, 2021; Sandø & Stærkind, 2021). A student may also find a research assistant or intern posting at their university, college or through membership of a professional association (Ely, 2021; Mahayosnand et al., 2021).

A successful mentor-mentee relationship happens when guidelines, communication (mode and frequency), and expectations are set at the beginning of the relationship (Donald, 2023; Ely, 2021; Mahayosnand et al., 2021; Mahayosnand & Bermejo, 2022). This assures that the relationship is mutually beneficial.

2.2. Institutional Research E-Mentors

2.2.1. College/university field experience, internship credit class to be matched

The pandemic of Covid-19 caused colleges and universities to be in lockdown during the 2021 spring, summer and fall semesters. During this time, a mentor was approved as field experience advisor for Providence College's mandatory bachelors Health, Policy and Management field experience programme and the University of Maryland School of Public Health's Masters in Public Health internship proctor (Mahayosnand et al., 2021; Mahayosnand & Bermejo, 2022). Three students were e-mentored for their mandatory 150-hours per semester to conduct public health research projects for 3-4 course credits. Students were not guaranteed authorship. At the beginning of the semester, the students and mentor agreed to school-approved outcomes, and signed contract agreements of their expectations, duties and responsibilities. In signing the contract, students agreed to having read and agreed to the difference between research acknowledgments and authorships, a non-disclosure agreement, the timeframe and milestones of their research project and more.

In the undergraduate programme, the course instructor matched the mentor with the students, and the mentor had the opportunity to interview and accept or reject them. For the graduate programme, a student saw an intern posting in a professional association in which they were both members. The graduate student worked with their programme advisor to approve the mentor to be their internship on-site advisor. During those semesters the mentor was located in Gaza, Palestine and the students were located in Providence, Rhode Island and the DC

metropolitan area, USA. All research work and writing were conducted remotely. The three students were co-authors and acknowledged in multiple peer reviewed publications.

Sarvenaz et al. offer numerous resources for students to build quality research mentorship relationships, such as a table of thematic problems that may occur and how to solve them (Sarabipour et al., 2022). They list organizations offering mentors to early career researchers as well. Mahayosnand and Bermejo (2022) also share helpful tips for mentees and mentors from both perspectives: student and mentor.

A programme worthy of duplication is the National Institute of Health National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)'s Summer Institute Program to Increase Diversity (SIPID) and Programs to Increase Diversity and Individuals Engaged in Health-related Research (PRIDE) (Rice et al., 2017). The programme offered a live 2–3-week summer research workshop, provided a mentor to communicate throughout the academic year via phone, email or webcams, and hosted a mid-year and annual meeting. The programme evaluation showed that the most beneficial skill the students developed was manuscript and grant writing.

2.2.2. Institution peer review course

The ability to conduct quality peer reviews is a crucial research skill to develop. One medical school shared their 15-week curriculum in which they developed a 22-day cycle for each student to submit their peer review to the journal (Schmidt et al., 2023). The faculty member shared that this programme was a success, due largely in part to the close relationship with the journal's editors. This institution-journal relationship helped remedy the peer reviewer deficit that the journal was experiencing. One of the medical students published a Letter to the Editor regarding this course as the sole author (Murtha, 2023). In an undergraduate biology course, students were guided through the peer review process by publishing their reviews of current biology Preprints (Otto et al., n.d.).

2.3. Academic Journals Providing Formal E-Mentors

Formal journal student e-mentoring programmes are positioned to be the most ideal model because journals have board members, editors and peer reviewers all dedicated to the journal's success to be potential e-mentors. While students eager to publish in specific journals provide the target audience to fill the gap of needed peer reviewers; students can also offer new and fresh perspective and technical-savvy advice to the journal (Northidge et al., 2014; Schmidt et al., 2023).

2.3.1. Academic Journal offering Research Writing and Mentoring Programmes

A long-standing Mentor Writing Programme is hosted by the Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing (CJON) (Tariman, 2009). This programme helps new writers be matched with a published nurse mentor with the goal to take the mentee's idea and create a published article.

2.3.2 Academic Journal informal mentoring programme but prize award – encouraging mentor-mentee joint paper submission

Nurse mentors are committed to creating the next generation of nurse authors by assisting them to publish in academic journals or nursing websites and blogs (DeMeyer & DeMeyer, 2018). DeMeyer and DeMeyer noted the *American Journal of Nursing (AJN)* annual Nurse Faculty Scholars/AJN Mentored Writing Award (American Journal of Nursing, n.d.). This award encourages registered nurses (RN) of any level of practice (such as clinical staff or faculty

member) to become first-authors. To qualify for the award, the RN must not have been published before in a peer review journal and must work with a mentor as a co-author.

3. Conclusion

Mentoring students in research writing and the journal publication process should start as early in one's academic career as possible. Age or academic status should not be seen as a deterrent or disadvantage as seen in the examples of the Health, Policy and Management bachelor students gaining remote research field experience for-credit and the undergraduate biology students publishing peer reviews as Preprints. When an ideal match is created or when a mentor-mentee pair troubleshoots their problems with mentoring training aids available to them, the relationship can be mutually beneficial on a professional and personal level. A patient, experienced and enthusiastic research mentor has proven to be most beneficial to the student. E-mentoring opportunities allows matches to occur without geographical boundaries. Such e-mentoring experiences can be offered by individual researchers, at the institutional level or from the academic journal—the latter being the most ideal model worthy of advocacy and replication.

References

- American Journal of Nursing. (n.d.). *Nurse faculty scholars / AJN mentored writing award: AJN the American Journal of Nursing*. Retrieved January 29, 2024, from <https://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/Pages/nursefaculty scholars.aspx>
- Baird, A. (2021). On writing research articles well: A guide for writing IS papers. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 22(5), 1197–1211.
- DeMeyer, E. S., & DeMeyer, S. (2018). Mentoring the next generation of authors. *Seminars in Oncology Nursing*, 34(4), 338–353. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soncn.2018.09.002>
- Donald, W. E. (2023). Three key ways that mentorship can support early career scholars. *GILE Journal of Skills Development*, 3(2), 3–6. <https://doi.org/10.52398/gjsd.2023.v3.i2.pp3-6>
- Ely, J. A. (2021). Modern mentorship: Developing medical writing mentor-mentee relationships in the virtual world. *Medical Writing*, 30, 36–39.
- Kane, G. (2022). How to write an “A” paper. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 23(5), 1071–1079.
- Li, Y. (2019). Mentoring junior scientists for research publication. In P. Habibi & K. Hyland (Eds.), *Novice writers and scholarly publication: Authors, mentors, gatekeepers*(pp. 233–250). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95333-5_13
- Mahayosnand, P. P., & Bermejo, D. M. (2022). E-Mentoring student researchers through an undergraduate field experience course—Lessons learned. *Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religion (JBASR)*, 23, 60–69. <https://doi.org/10.18792/jbasr.v23i0.58>
- Mahayosnand, P. P., Zanders, L., Sabra, Z. M., Essa, S., Ahmed, S., Bermejo, D. M., Funmilayo, M., Sabra, D. M., & Ablay, S. (2021). E-Mentoring female underrepresented public health student researchers: Supporting a more diverse postpandemic Workforce. *Health Security*, 19(S1), S–72. <https://doi.org/10.1089/hs.2021.0042>
- Murtha, C. (2023). Medical students benefit from becoming peer reviewers. *Canadian Medical Education Journal*, 14(3), 154. <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.76325>
- Northidge, M. E., Holtzman, D., Bergeron, C. D., Zambrana, R. E., & Greenberg, M. R. (2014). Mentoring for publication in the American Journal of Public Health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(S1), S14-S16. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302543>

-
- Otto, J. L., McDowell, G. S., Balgopal, M. M., & Lijek, R. S. (n.d.). Preprint peer review enhances undergraduate biology students' disciplinary literacy and sense of belonging in STEM. *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education*, 24(2), e00053-23. <https://doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.00053-23>
- Rice, T. K., Jeffe, D. B., Boyington, J. E. A., Jobe, J. B., Dávila-Román, V. G., Gonzalez, J. E., Fuentes, L. de las, Makala, L. H. C., Sarkar, R., Ogedegbe, G. G., Taylor, A. L., Czajkowski, S., Rao, D. C., Pace, B. S., Jean-Louis, G., & Boutjdir, M. (2017). Mentored training to increase diversity among faculty in the biomedical sciences: The NHLBI Summer Institute Programs to Increase Diversity (SIPID) and the Programs to Increase Diversity among Individuals Engaged in Health-related Research (PRIDE). *Ethnicity & Disease*, 27(3), 249–256.
- Sandø, L., & Stærkind, B. S. (2021). Someone in your corner: Musings of a mentor and mentee. *Medical Writing*, 30, 40–43.
- Sarabipour, S., Hainer, S. J., Arslan, F. N., de Winde, C. M., Furlong, E., Bielczyk, N., Jadavji, N. M., Shah, A. P., & Davla, S. (2022). Building and sustaining mentor interactions as a mentee. *The FEBS Journal*, 289(6), 1374–1384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/febs.15823>
- Schmidt, C., Thiel, G., & Murtha, C. (2023). Teaching peer reviewing to medical students through authentic peer reviews: How to build the next generation of scholars. *Canadian Medical Education Journal*, 14(4), 129–136. <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.76489>
- Tariman, J. D. (2009). Mentoring in publication: A lifelong legacy. *ONS Connect*, 24(1), 8–12.
- Zografou, A., & McDermott, L. (2022). Mentorship in higher education: The keys to unlocking meaningful mentoring relationships. *GILE Journal of Skills Development*, 2(1), 71–78. <https://doi.org/10.52398/gjsd.2022.v2.i1.pp71-78>

Declaration Statements

Conflict of Interest

The author reports no conflict of interest.

Funding

The author received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

Ethics Statement

No dataset is associated with this article.

Open Access Agreement

This article is published under a CC BY 4.0 license. This license allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, so long as attribution is given to the creator. The license allows for commercial use. For more information, please visit

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Corresponding Author

The corresponding author for this manuscript is Ponn P Mahayosnand, MPH who can be contacted by email via ponn.mahayosnand@roninstitute.org.