

The Structure Again! Common Mistakes in Writing the Discussion

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One of the most frequent comments that the editors of *Education and Self Development* make at the stage of preliminary assessment relates to the Discussion chapter. This section is either not discursive or written superficially. In this editorial I want to delve deeper into this issue.

To begin with the structure of a scholarly paper, we recommend using the IMRaD format. This is an acronym made up of the first letters of the following chapters: introduction, methods, results and discussion. There are variations within this format depending on the scope of a journal. For instance, the introduction can contain the analysis of prior studies, discussion can be integrated into the results chapter or the discursive aspect of a paper can be combined with conclusion. Though this practice is acceptable, we do not recommend authors to use integration. The rationale behind this recommendation is that it is difficult to achieve a balance in case of incorporation. When authors combine the results with the discussion, the focus is often shifted towards the findings, and the discussion usually gets lost in a huge flow of information or is not even presented. Therefore, separate sections eliminate such shortcomings.

From the general rules for paper organisation let us move to the content. When authors work on the discussion, they should remember that it is an important, if not the most important, chapter in the article. The discursive part of a manuscript highlights the significance of a study. Poor and not well-thought discussions affect the general impression of the research. What mistakes are made in this part?

First, the chapter is often written as continuation of the results, which is not right. All data collected during the investigation should be presented in the results with the interpretation of empirical data in the following section. We should never repeat the information described earlier in the text or introduce new data or results in the discussion (SRG, n.d.). Moreover, the interpretation does not equate with authors' thoughts on the research topic. The reflection is encouraged, but authors' considerations should not grow into an essay on the problem under study.

Another common mistake made in the discussion is writing the section as the second literature review. Referring to the literature and relating the findings to existing theories and previous studies is a key element of the discussion. However, the comparison of results should not come down to a simple list of similar studies, which is often the case. Authors are expected to show the findings that are in line with previous works, as well as to discuss contrasting results, if any, seeking to explain the reasons behind these differences.

The third issue that authors forget about is limitations which any research project has. In the scholarly community researchers are highly encouraged to describe the limiting factors they have faced in the course of work. It is crucial to remember that limitations are not about discrediting your research and enumerating your errors. The paragraph

with limitations should be seen as an opportunity to provide a full picture in order to avoid speculations and guess-work from readers (McCombes, 2022).

In this editorial I could not describe all aspects of the problem, but touched upon some common mistakes and showed how to avoid them. I hope this information will help young researchers to overcome the pitfalls in writing the discussion. Finally, I would like to point out that this section can be a criterion of quality of the whole research. If the discursive part of an article is written thoroughly, it can highlight the significance of the study. But if the writing and organisation of the chapter is superficial, it can diminish the results of months-long research work.

References

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