

PROBLEMS OF BIOLOGY EDUCATION COLLEGE STUDENTS IN JOURNAL PUBLICATION: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract. The increase in the quantity of student publications in scientific journals has not been optimally followed by an improvement in their quality. Articles published in unaccredited journals still dominate compared to those published in nationally accredited journals. This study explores students' abilities and difficulties in publishing articles in journals. The method used is survey research. The population was lecturers and students of the Biology Education Study Program at Lambung Mangkurat University (ULM) Banjarmasin. The student categories targeted were those who had never published, were learning to publish, and had already published, with a total of 196 students. Ten lecturers and 49 students were selected as the sample using random sampling techniques. Data were collected through a Google Form questionnaire and analyzed descriptively. The results revealed that students face difficulties in publishing in journal articles due to a lack of understanding of journal article writing guidelines, the absence of clear and practical article writing guides, and suboptimal supervision from lecturers for students interested in writing for journal publication. The alternative solution offered from the data is to make guidelines for preparing articles for journal publication and provide assistance in writing articles intensely and periodically.

Keywords: publication difficulties; article quality; student writing problems

INTRODUCTION

Universities are increasingly encouraging lecturers and researchers to actively publish scientific papers in journals as an effort to improve academic quality and institutional reputation (Sahban, 2024; Silitonga et al., 2023). Publication in scientific journals is considered important because it is a measure of performance and contribution in the field of science (Rusdi et al., 2020), as well as an important requirement for promotion and meeting accreditation requirements (Parmin et al., 2021). In addition, engagement in publications in internationally recognized journals, such as Scopus, is essential for exploring topics like researcher mobility, network visualization, and spatial bibliometrics (Baas et al., 2020). On a simpler level, Google Scholar also indexes many national and international journals (Fajeriadi et al., 2024; Fajeriadi & Fahmi, 2024; Fajeriadi & Fitriani, 2024). Involvement in these publications helps expand the influence of Indonesian research on a global level, as well as encouraging the advancement of innovation and real solutions to problems in society.

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The challenge in publishing scientific papers in journals is not only in fulfilling the quantity of publications but also in improving the quality of publications (Aksnes et al., 2019; Pagani et al., 2015; Teixeira da Silva & Dobránszki, 2015). This can be seen from the percentage of scientific papers published in accredited national journals or reputable international journals, compared to publications in unaccredited journals. This concern is exacerbated by the increasing number of publications in predatory journals (Mills & Inouye, 2021; Teixeira da Silva & Dobránszki, 2015). This focus on quality requires researchers to not only write but also ensure that the resulting research meets higher standards, both in terms of methodology, relevance, and scientific impact (Belcher et al., 2016; Sovacool et al., 2018). Efforts to improve publication quality also include an in-depth understanding of how to select the right journals, adhere to scientific writing standards, and develop effective strategies to deal with the more rigorous review process at reputable journals.

Based on the documentation of data on the publication of ULM biology education student articles in journals, over the past five years, most student articles have been published in unaccredited journals. The number of articles published in accredited national journals is relatively few even for journals with a minimum accreditation of Sinta 3 and higher. The results of this documentation show that the quantity of student publications has increased, but it has not been followed by an increase in quality. Publication of articles that have good quality will have a more significant impact, both for the advancement of science and further research (Jasiyah et al., 2023; Primawanti & Ali, 2022; Rohman et al., 2024).

Previous research on students' difficulties in publishing articles in journals has highlighted many aspects of academic skills, such as low scientific writing skills (Murningsih & Norah, 2019; Nugroho et al., 2023), and lack of understanding of research methodology (Suratni et al., 2025). However, there are also difficulties in adapting manuscripts to strict journal formats and standards. In addition, several studies have also examined external factors, such as the lack of guidance from lecturers (Budhyani & Angendari, 2021), limited access to quality references (Purwanto et al., 2021), and students' lack of understanding of the peer-review process and publication ethics (Azhima et al., 2023; Nandiyanto et al., 2024). Based on these studies, it is known that the analysis of student difficulties in publishing articles in journals is carried out separately, separately, distinguishing between student-related factors and external influences such as lecturer support and access to resources.

This condition certainly needs to be analyzed and evaluated in order to find the root of the problem. A preliminary analysis is needed to find out the problems of students in publishing articles in journals so that they can be followed up and given appropriate solutions, especially an analysis that brings together the opinions of students and lecturers. Institutional demands that require students to publish, the importance of considering quality in addition to quantity, and a larger percentage of publications in unaccredited journals are the background so that this study aims to analyze student problems in publishing articles in journals. This research is limited to exploring the abilities and difficulties of ULM Biology Education Study Program students in publishing articles in scientific journals.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is survey research that aims to collect data on the need to prepare scientific articles for publication in journals. The survey conducted in this study is at the exploratory level, which according to Singarimbun & Effendi (1989) and Creswell (2017) aims to present data according to the results of data collection. Data were collected in September 2024. The data sources were lecturers and students of the

Biology Education Study Program at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (ULM) Banjarmasin. Lecturers were selected due to their experience and insight in mentoring students to prepare scientific articles, as well as an understanding of publication standards in scientific journals. Students, on the other hand, provide data regarding the needs, challenges, and experiences in writing scientific articles for publication.

The sampling technique applied was random sampling, following the recommendations of Singarimbun & Effendi (1989) dan Creswell (2017) who suggest a minimum sample of 10% of the total population for survey research. The population of lecturers in the ULM Biology Education Study Program is 20, given that the population of lecturers is only 20, a 10% sample would be too small. Therefore, a 50% sample was selected. The target student population is 196 covering three categories with the number 60 have never published, 66 are studying publication, and 70 have published. The sample of students surveyed was 49, exceeding the minimum recommended 10% of the total population. The limitation of the analyzed data is all survey answers entered until September 23, 2024.

Data were collected using a research instrument in the form of a questionnaire with 15 questions covering indicators of understanding, experience, barriers, training needs, and resources related to writing scientific articles. The instrument has been tested for validity through the Content Validity Index (CVI) and meets the valid criteria but is not published. The instrument was distributed using Google Form online media. Data were tabulated automatically in percentage form and analyzed descriptively comparing the percentage of each answer. Quantitative descriptive analysis was used to describe the distribution of respondents' answers related to understanding, experience, barriers, training needs, and resources for writing scientific articles. The questionnaire data tabulated in percentages were compared to identify patterns, trends, and prioritized needs of students and lecturers, according to the exploratory objectives of the survey research. The research procedure implemented is presented in Figure 1.

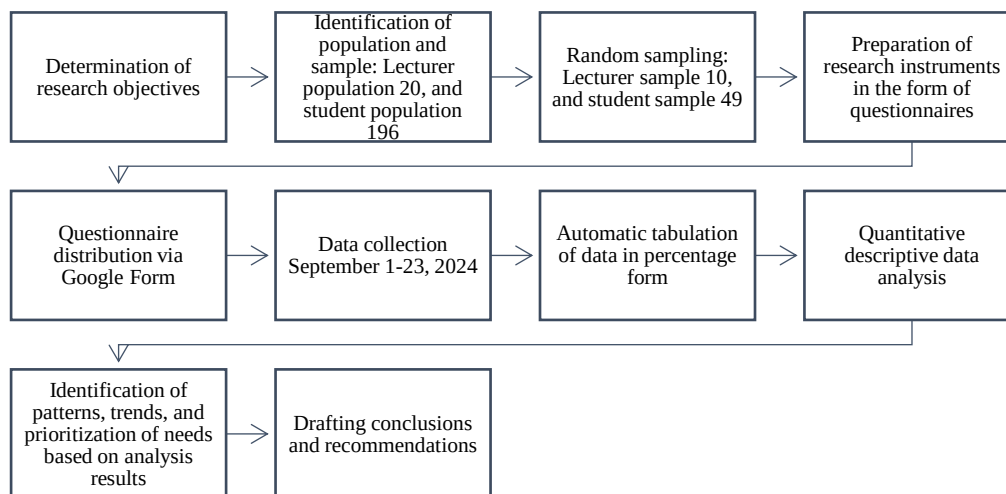


Figure 1. Survey research procedure

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tabulated survey data are presented in Table 1. Based on Table 1, nine out of 15 questions received answers with an average percentage above 50%.

Table 1. Percentage data of survey results to lecturers

Questions	Answers with the Highest Percentage	Percentage
1. How often do students have difficulty writing articles for publication?	Quite often	50%
2. What are the main obstacles in writing scientific articles?	Complex writing structure	70%
3. The level of understanding of students regarding the format of scientific articles according to journal guidelines?	Understand enough	60%
4. How important are specific guidelines in writing scientific articles?	Very important	80%
5. What is the most difficult part of writing an article according to students?	Research method; Discussion	40% (each answer)
6. Difficulty writing references according to journal format?	Enough difficulty	60%
7. How often do students receive major revisions from scientific journals?	Quite often	50%
8. Use of software to help write articles?	Sometimes	60%
9. Main obstacles in publishing articles in scientific journals?	Data preparation and analysis	50%
10. Is there a need for special training related to writing scientific articles?	Very necessary	60%
11. Students' level of understanding of the peer-review process?	Understand enough	50%
12. Difficulty writing abstracts and keywords according to journal requirements?	Quite difficult	60%
13. Keeping up with developments in determining the urgency of research?	Sometimes	70%
14. Have you ever had an article rejected because it did not meet the writing guidelines?	Yes, often; sometimes	40% (each answer)
15. Does the guide to writing scientific articles for biology students help with publication?	Very helpful	70%

The data in Table 1 shows the various perspectives of lecturers regarding the low ability of students in preparing articles for publication in journals. Seventy percent of lecturers indicated that the structure of scientific articles is overly complex, which indicates an urgent need for simpler and more systematic guidelines. This guide is needed to help especially novice writers to better understand the expected format and structure. A total of 80% of lecturers stated that specific guidelines are highlighting the strong need for practical and accessible guidance aligned with publication standards. In addition, 60% of lecturers admitted that the students they mentored had difficulty in writing references and abstracts according to the format. These findings emphasize the importance of dedicated instruction on writing references and abstracts, which are critical components of publication readiness.

Research from Anugraheni (2021) also found difficulties in writing and publishing scientific papers caused by lack of motivation, time, lack of participation in training, and lack of assistance. In line with Lestari et al., (2024) who found the main obstacle was not understanding the scientific publication process. In addition, according to Fadhillah et al., (2023) revealed that language mastery, grammar, and the ability to choose words are also challenges in writing scientific articles. These studies, alongside the current findings, suggest that difficulties with abstracts and references are major challenges, and the preparation of special guidelines for writing scientific articles is needed, it turns out that other factors to consider are motivation to

participate in training, assistance needed, and good grammar skills. This is also in line with the analysis of the following survey results.

Although 60% of lecturers reported that students already use software tools, writing challenges persist. This suggests a need for training in how to effectively use these tools to improve the efficiency and quality of writing. In addition, 60% of lecturers feel that there is a need for specialized training in scientific article writing for students. This indicates that while written guidelines are essential to solve the problem of students' low ability to write journal articles, interactive learning that involves hands-on training is also a pressing need. Finally, 70% of lecturers stated that student research urgency is sometimes relevant to current issues, highlighting the importance of aligning topics with global trends.

The results of the analysis show that according to lecturers and as per previous research, writing structure and format are the main challenges for students in writing scientific articles (Alfaki, 2015; Fareed et al., 2016; Toba et al., 2019). While many understand the importance of software, skill gaps remain and can be addressed with additional training (Li, 2022; Nikat, 2020). Simpler writing guidelines would increase effectiveness. A better understanding of references and abstracts would also help, while the alignment of research topics with global issues needs to be emphasized to make research broadly relevant. A good scientific writing guide, supported by interactive training, will empower lecturers and students to contribute to impactful research. This analysis is supported by the student responses in Table 2, which show that the reasons for difficulties in writing journal articles are complementary to the lecturers' views.

Table 2. Percentage data from the survey to students

Questions	Answers with the Highest Percentage	Percentage
1. How often do you write articles for publication in scientific journals?	Never	51%
2. Level of understanding of the guidelines for writing scientific articles?	Lack of understanding	59.2%
3. What is the most difficult part of writing an article?	Discussion	49%
4. The importance of specific guidelines for writing scientific articles?	Very important	95.9%
5. Difficulty compiling a bibliography according to journal format?	Rarely	55.1%
6. Understanding of the journal article revision process?	Lack of understanding	65.3%
7. Use of applications or software to help write articles?	Sometimes	42.9%
8. What are the biggest obstacles in writing scientific articles for journals?	Data compilation and analysis	67.3%
9. Frequency of following the latest guidelines related to writing journal articles?	Rarely	55.1%
10. Understanding of the format of writing abstracts and keywords?	Lack of understanding	55.1%
11. Difficulties in submitting articles to scientific journals?	Quite often	36.7%
12. Difficulty writing articles according to the requirements of accredited journals?	Quite difficult	61.2%
13. Have you ever had an article rejected because it did not fit the journal writing format?	Never	53.1%

Questions	Answers with the Highest Percentage	Percentage
14. What is the importance of training in writing scientific articles for journal publication?	Very important	85.7%
15. Would specific guidelines for writing scientific articles help with publication?	Very helpful	98%

The results in Table 2 identifies eleven main reasons with percentages above 50% that cause students difficulty in writing articles for publication in journals. The largest percentage of them was the lack of understanding of the article writing guidelines requested by the journal, which reached 59.2%. In addition, 65.3% of students also felt that they did not understand the revision process after submitting the article. Regarding data preparation and analysis, 67.3% of students admitted to having difficulties at this stage, making this one of the biggest challenges in journal publication.

In addition, the data showed that 51% of students had never written an article before, which explains their lack of experience in the scientific writing process. Students also struggled with the format of writing abstracts and keywords requested by journals, with a percentage of 55.1%. Meanwhile, as many as 61.2% found it difficult for their articles to meet the requirements of accredited journals. However, the importance of training in writing scientific articles was strongly emphasized by 85.7% of students, with almost all students, 98%, thinking that specific guidelines for writing articles in the field of biology education would be very helpful.

As previous studies have shown, lack of experience and understanding of article writing and publication procedures are the main challenges faced by students (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Y. Li & Flowerdew, 2020; Mills & Inouye, 2021). This highlights the urgent need for more targeted guidance and intensive training on scientific writing. In addition, technical obstacles such as difficulties in compiling data and following journal formats also contribute to the low success rate of student publications. It can be concluded that the support of specialized guidance and practical training is predicted to improve students' competence in writing and publishing articles in scientific journals. The intersection of the results of this survey to students with the results of the survey to lecturers is shown in Figure 2.

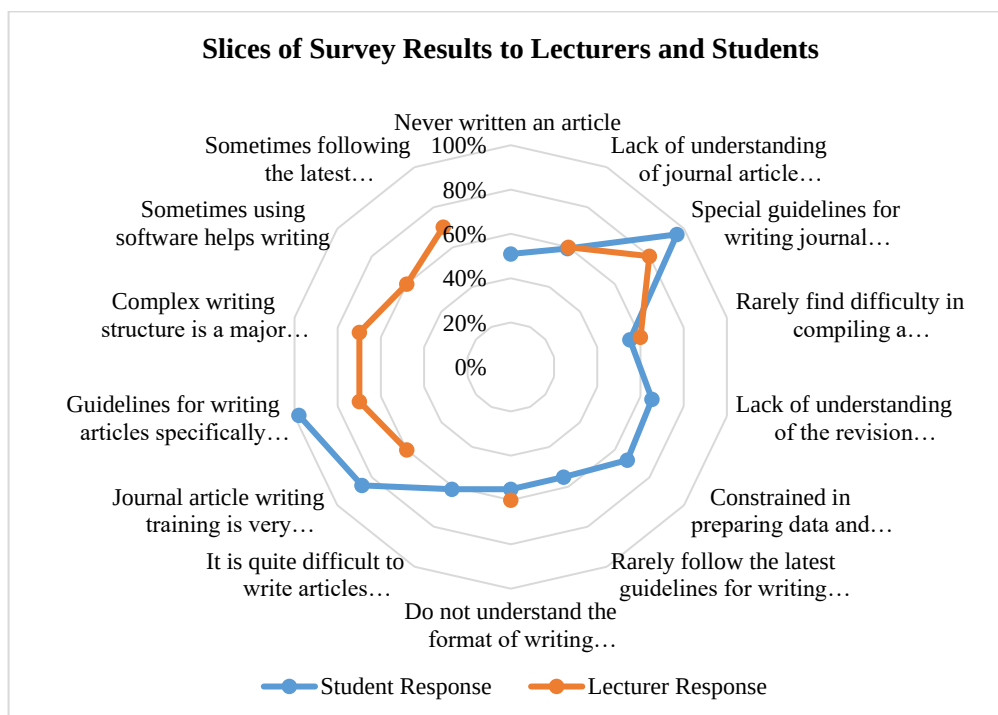


Figure 2. Slice chart of survey results to lecturers and students

Based on Figure 2, there are six important aspects where lecturers and students show overlapping responses related to journal article writing. Most students and lecturers alike recognize the low ability and difficulty of students in writing articles for publication in journals is due to a lack of understanding of writing guidelines from journals, and the need for special guidelines for writing articles. In addition, difficulties in preparing bibliographies, abstracts, and keywords that are in accordance with the demands of journals are also the cause. Lecturers and students also agree that training in writing articles for publication in journals along with specific writing guidelines for biology education will greatly help solve this problem. This confirms the importance of developing guidelines that are more specific and relevant to specific fields of study, to make it easier for lecturers and students to understand the technical aspects of writing scientific journals.

This analysis shows that students' ability to write articles worthy of publication in scientific journals still needs to be improved. This condition can hinder students' academic development (Double et al., 2020; Graham et al., 2020; Madigan & Curran, 2021). The absence of adequate guidance and training makes the quality of articles produced often does not meet the criteria of accredited journals (Abidin et al., 2023; Fajaruddin et al., 2023; Nisa et al., 2023). As a result, students' participation in scientific publications is limited, reducing their opportunities to engage in wider collaborative research. If this problem is not addressed, the advancement of research among students may be hindered, which will adversely affect academic reputation as well as the quality and scientific contribution of publications.

As a solution, educational institutions should develop a more structured training program that includes in-depth guidance in writing scientific articles, both in terms of writing format, reference management, and the revision process after submission. These guidelines should be tailored to each field of study, especially for

biology education, given the high demand for specific guidelines in this field. The training can also teach the use of software that supports article writing, such as applications for reference management and tools for writing and revising articles.

CONCLUSION

The results show that the biggest challenges faced by ULM Biology Education Study Program students when preparing scientific articles for publication in journals are complexity of article structure, lack of understanding of publication guidelines, and difficulty writing references and abstracts, and poor understanding of the revision process. The recommended solutions include the creation of a systematic and customized writing guide, as well as intensive training using supporting software. If left unaddressed, these issues may diminish the quality of student publications, limit academic contributions, and negatively impact the program's reputation. The limitation of this study lies in the small number of respondents, which may not fully reflect broader views.

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