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Review article

Research and Publication. Part 7. How to Organize and Present Bibliography

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Abstract

During the preparation of a scientific manuscript, accuracy in citations and the proper compilation of the bibliography are fundamental to ensuring data validity, source traceability, and compliance with editorial standards. This article describes the most common errors related to reference management and provides practical recommendations aimed at improving the quality of scientific work through careful and ethical handling of references.

Keywords

Bibliographic references, quality, scientific work.

INTRODUCTION

The correct citation of sources and the rigorous preparation of the bibliography are not merely formal requirements but also an essential component for ensuring the robustness of information and the academic integrity of an article[1,2]. References allow the reader to verify the data presented, identify the context of prior knowledge, and recognize the author's original contribution[1,2]. However, in editorial practice, errors that compromise the quality of scientific work are frequently encountered, such as the omission of key references[3], the use of outdated sources, formatting errors, and misplaced citations or those without a corresponding entry in the bibliography[1,2].

FAILURES IN BIBLIOGRAPHIC CITATIONS

To identify the most common citation failures and facilitate their understanding, they have been grouped into five categories: errors in preparing reference lists, failures in in-text citations, problems in source selection, practices that can lead to plagiarism, and errors derived from the use of technological tools such as reference managers and artificial intelligence applications. Based on this classification, a practical guide aimed at their prevention and the stimulation of good academic practices is offered.

Errors in the Reference List

One of the most common problems is non-compliance with the citation standards required by the journal or institution to which the document will be submitted, which often leads to corrections or rejections. It is also common to reproduce references without verifying the original sources, which perpetuates existing errors and diminishes the reliability of the content[2].

Other errors include imprecise bibliographic data, such as inappropriately abbreviated author names, incorrect

titles, or incomplete information on volumes and pagination, which hinders the traceability of sources[4]. Likewise, incorrectly applying authorship rules can cause confusion in the attribution of academic work[2].

Sometimes, unnecessary elements are included, such as the issue number or the exact publication date, which not only add no value but also contradict editorial guidelines[1]. On occasion, authors forget to adapt the style when resubmitting an article to a new journal, which can cause additional delays[2].

A frequent oversight is citing a digitally accessed document as a print source, in addition to omitting key data such as the DOI or access date[1,2]. A careful review of the reference list and rigorous adherence to editorial standards are essential to guarantee the quality of the document.

Common In-Text Citation Errors

This category includes problems such as the ambiguous grouping of multiple references, a lack of correspondence between in-text citations and the reference list, and the use of unverifiable sources[1]. Furthermore, faults such as citing in inappropriate sections, like the abstract or results, incorrect use of sequential order in numeric styles like Vancouver, and the omission of hyphens in ranges of consecutive citations are also detected[1,2].

Problems Related to Plagiarism

Plagiarism represents one of the most serious problems in scientific production, manifesting both in content and in the omission or manipulation of bibliographic citations[1]. Appropriating others' ideas or texts without due acknowledgment equates to a serious violation of professional ethics. Likewise, reusing fragments of previous works without the corresponding citation or excessively resorting to self-citation for self-promotion purposes affects the impartiality of the document[2].

Finally, the inclusion of irrelevant citations to increase the impact of certain journals also constitutes an ethical deviation[1,2].

Errors in Source Selection

Beyond formally correct citation, the quality of a scientific manuscript depends on the relevance and timeliness of the sources used[5]. Among the most relevant errors is omitting key or widely recognized works in the field of study[2]. Another frequent error is citing predominantly old sources, especially if they are more than five years old and are not fundamental texts[5]. These situations suggest that an adequate update of the literature has not been performed, weakening the relevance of the scientific content.

In summary, bibliographic selection must be strategic, incorporating current, diverse, and high-quality references that solidly support the author's arguments.

Errors in the Use of Technological Tools

The use of technological tools, such as reference managers and artificial intelligence, has transformed academic writing by facilitating the organization of references and the production of content. However, their unsupervised use can introduce new errors that compromise the quality of the article[6]. A common error is assuming that the reference manager guarantees accuracy. Although useful, these tools can generate errors in format, author names, punctuation, or bibliographic information, especially if the imported metadata is incorrect. Furthermore, the presence of duplicate references within the text can result in repeated citations in the final bibliography, affecting the coherence of the work[6].

In the case of artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, the primary risk is the generation of nonexistent or incorrect references. These models can produce convincing texts that contain false, inaccurate, or unsupported information[7]. Relying on artificial intelligence for tasks such as writing or preparing references without human verification increases the risk of introducing serious errors into the article. Similarly, there is also a potential risk of plagiarism when using texts generated or paraphrased by artificial intelligence, which may evade automated detection systems[7].

In summary, although these tools are valuable, their responsible use demands critical supervision by the author, who must manually verify each citation and source to ensure accuracy, originality, and compliance with editorial standards.

CATEGORIZED RECOMMENDATIONS TO AVOID ERRORS IN CITATION AND REFERENCING

Based on this classification, a guide aimed at their prevention is proposed to facilitate presentation and minimize grounds for non-acceptance.

Reference List

- Review the instructions for authors before starting your document[1] and confirm the bibliographic style required by the journal (APA, Vancouver, Chicago, among others)[1,2].
- Use a reference manager like Endnote, Mendeley, or Zotero, with its plugin for Word or LibreOffice, which

allows easy insertion or deletion of references, automatically updating the list[6].
- Create a folder per project from the beginning to store all information in a segmented manner without crossing information from one research project with another[6].
- Manually verify each entry: author names, year, title, journal, volume, pages, and DOI[1,2].
- Review and correct errors derived from automatic reference managers[6].
- Respect the authorship rules of the style used (for example, using "et al." only after a certain number of authors).
- Do not add unnecessary information, such as issue numbers or acceptance dates, if not requested[5].
- Adapt the format if the article is submitted to a different journal after a rejection[5].
- Adequately distinguish between digital and print sources, and include the DOI or URL whenever necessary[1,2].

In-Text Citation

- Place each citation next to the specific fragment it refers to[1].
- Avoid repeating the same citation multiple times within the same context or paragraph[1].
- Verify the exact correspondence between in-text citations and entries in the reference list[1,2].
- Respect the required format (numbers in parentheses, superscripts, names and dates, among others)[1,2].
- Do not use full author names if the style does not require it[1].
- Avoid citing in the abstract or results unless the journal's guidelines permit it[1].
- In numeric styles (like Vancouver), maintain the order of appearance and use hyphens for ranges (e.g., 2-4, to cite references 2 through 4)[1].

Plagiarism and Citation Ethics

- Always cite any idea, data, or text that is not your own, even if it has been paraphrased[1,2].
- Accompany any adaptation of external information with references[1,2].
- Avoid excessive self-citations, as this can be considered bias or academic self-promotion[1,2].
- Include only references with a clear and justifiable purpose in the body of the article[1,2].

Selection and Quality of Sources

- Include current, relevant sources directly linked to the article's topic[1,2].
- Prioritize original articles and systematic reviews of high methodological quality[1].
- Limit the use of grey literature (theses, technical reports, websites) that has not been peer-reviewed[1].
- Avoid citing marginal or irrelevant sources that do not provide solid evidence[1,2].
- Whenever possible, cite primary sources instead of secondary references[1].

Use of Technological Tools

- Keep your manager synchronized with the cloud or make external backups of your information[6].
- Review automatic errors generated by reference managers, such as incorrect punctuation or abbreviations[7].
- Verify the existence and accuracy of any source generated by artificial intelligence before including it[8]. You can use platforms like Scite.ai to review the current status of cited articles.
- Carefully supervise automated bibliographies, correcting inconsistencies with applications like Crossref or PubMed[6].
- Do not delegate your work to automated tools; the author's critical review remains indispensable.

CONCLUSIONS

Organizing and presenting the bibliography correctly is a fundamental task; it represents an indicator of quality, rigor, and academic responsibility. This document identifies the main failures related to the handling of references in biomedical texts. Each of these aspects, although sometimes minor in appearance, can significantly impact the evaluation of an article. Avoiding these errors requires attention to detail, knowledge of the required style, constant supervision, and responsible use of digital resources.

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