

REDUCE REJECTION  
HIGH IMPACT  
PUBLISHING IN  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

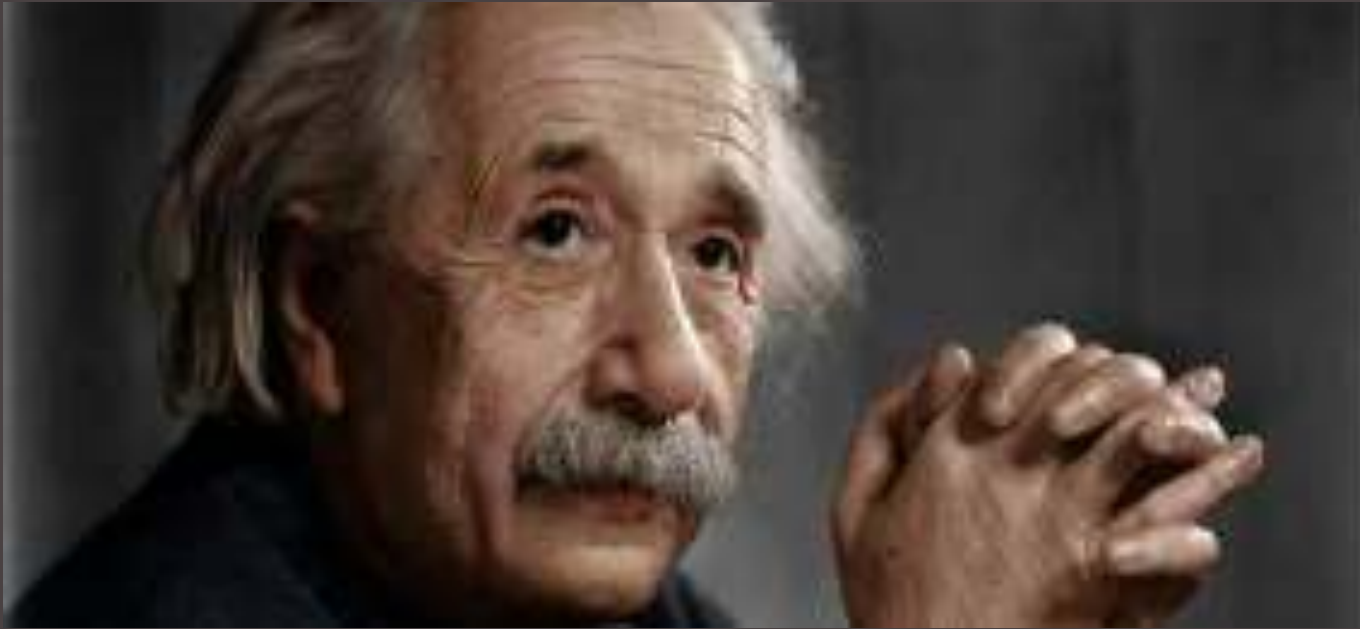
*Dr. Amrita Kaur | 10 May 2020*



# STRUCTURE OF TODAY'S PRESENTATION

1. Why Writing Social Science Article is DIFFERENT
2. Three considerations BEFORE beginning to write
  - The Value of Peer Review
  - Choosing the Right Journal
  - Avoid Desk Rejection
3. The Winning Review
  - Issue
  - Argument/Persuasion
  - Discussion/Conclusion
  - Alignment
  - Language

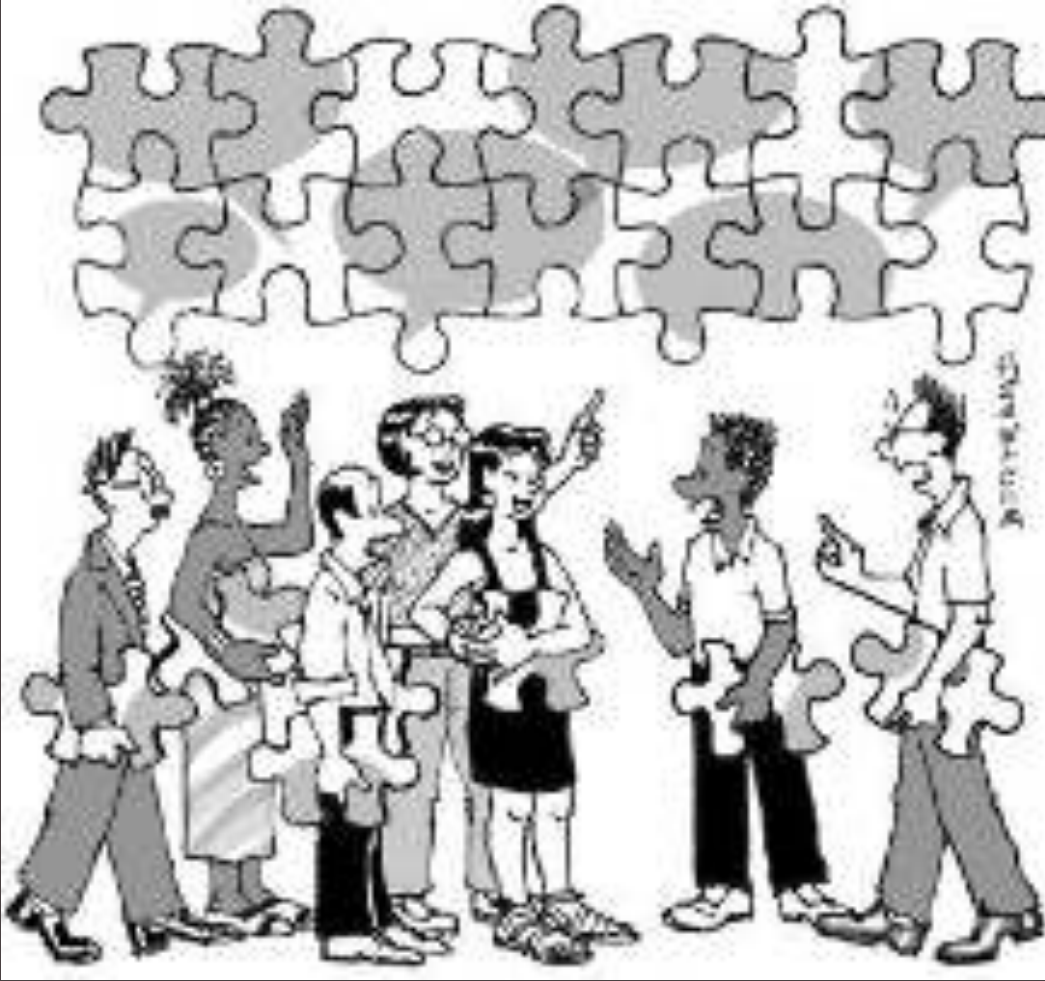
# WRITING FOR SOFT SCIENCES



*“...understanding  
physics is child's play  
compared to  
understanding child's  
play”.*

# The SOFT Science

## SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH



- Subjective
- No right or wrong answers.
- Answers don't match up often with established scientific laws or generalizable laws or predictions.
- Precision of Language - Degree of persuasion - High

## HARD SCIENCE RESEARCH



- Objective
- Usually based on scientific laws
- Precision of Language -  
Degree of persuasion -  
Moderate

# 'SOFT' SCIENCE IS ACTUALLY TOO 'HARD'!



1. No Laws
2. Multiple Experts
3. Zillions of Variables
4. Many Levels of Action
5. Imprecise Measures

*Bekkers (2016)- <https://renebekkers.wordpress.com/2016/11/27/five-reasons-why-social-science-is-so-hard/> ruments have near perfect validity and reliability.*

# ACCEPTANCE RATE



As low as 5% (e.g. Harvard Educational Review).

Highest : 20%

H-index- Max 8 (American Psychologist)

*[https://education.byu.edu/sites/default/files/EDLF/documents/EDLF\\_Journal\\_Tier\\_Ranking\\_Approved.pdf](https://education.byu.edu/sites/default/files/EDLF/documents/EDLF_Journal_Tier_Ranking_Approved.pdf)*



TO CUT  
THE  
STORY  
SHORT...

Writing for social sciences requires

- ◆ Careful,
- ◆ theoretically arduous
- ◆ methodologically rigorous

exploration of the subjects we choose to write about.



THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE



WHY AM I TALKING ABOUT  
REJECTIONS?

(TRANSLATED: WE DON'T NEED ANY NEGATIVITY HERE)

Here IS IT WHY

PUBLISHED ARTICLE

An iceberg floating in the ocean. The small tip above the water surface is labeled 'PUBLISHED ARTICLE'. The much larger, submerged part of the iceberg is bracketed and labeled with the text 'Peer Reviews', 'Rejections', 'Revise, Submit and Resubmit...'. The background shows a clear blue sky and a calm sea.

Peer Reviews  
Rejections  
Revise, Submit and  
Resubmit...

# THE IDEA IS TO

Avoid  
Desk  
Rejection

Receive  
Peer  
Reviews

Reject or  
Revise or  
Submit

A young woman with red hair is looking at a tablet in a city at night. The background is blurred with city lights and buildings. The text is overlaid on a dark grey rectangular area on the right side of the image.

## PEER REVIEW IS PRECIOUS

- There are universities to earn qualifications.
- There are workshops to learn skills.
- However, there is no better way than receiving **peer reviews** to learn to write for high impact journals

# THE ROLE OF PEER REVIEWS





WHAT WAS THE  
LONGEST PEER REVIEW  
YOU HAVE EVER  
RECEIVED?



LET'S BEGIN WITH  
CHOOSING A JOURNAL

# QUESTION TIME

When do you choose the journal for your article?

- a. Before you begin writing?
- b. After you have finished writing ?
- c. During the writing?

*Does it make any differences to your publication success?*



- Choose EARLY
- Understand Requirements.
- Scope of Journal
- Geographical Coverage
- Publication Frequency
- Backup Journals



GETTING  
PAST THE  
EDITOR:  
DESK REVIEW

# HOW TO GAUGE THE QUALITY BEFORE SUBMISSION



PASS THE DESK REVIEW- 60%

A red pen is positioned diagonally across the top right of the image. Below it, a black square checkbox is checked with a red mark. To the right of the checkbox, the word "Pass" is partially visible in a large, bold, black font. The background is a light, textured surface.

# PASSING THE DESK REVIEW

1. Title
2. Abstract
3. Issue
4. Methodology



## Intriguing / Provoking / Triggering curiosity.

- ◆ *National student survey metrics: where is the room for improvement? Higher education (3.0)*
- ◆ *An assessment arms race and its fallout: High-stakes grading and the case for slow scholarship. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher education (2.4).*
- ◆ **Regional Emphasis (based on the journal).**
- ◆ *The impact and outcomes of (non-education) doctorates: the case of an emerging Bhutan. Higher education*
- ◆ **Short**
- ◆ **Avoid Jargons**



# Abstract

- ◆ Write in extended format (e.g. MJLI), then merge.
- ◆ Highlight Gap and the Purpose

e.g.

*-Research on how performance-based funding influences the behaviour and performance of academics is limited in Europe*

*-Care has received relatively little attention in higher education (HE) literature. However, literature alluding to care reveals contrasting perspectives.*

- ◆ Pick phrases from the Manuscript!
- ◆ Include Method (design/participants/analysis).
- ◆ Findings/Conclusion/Implications

e.g.

*-It concludes that this kind of architecture can provide a useful guide for growth.*

*-We argue for the need to recognise teaching in HE as cognitive, emotional and embodied work*





# Currency and Relevancy



## COMPREHENSIVE/ROBUST METHODOLOGY

In terms of  
*Methods*  
Sample Size  
*Analysis*

SO, WE GOT PAST THE DESK.  
WELL DONE!

*Lets see how we can get a  
Winning Review*



# THE FOUR PILLARS

1. **Novelty and Relevance** (My issue and methods are unique)
  2. **Resolute Argument** – (If my issue is not addressed, the sky will fall)
  3. **Discussion and Conclusion**
  4. **Alignment**
-

## Novelty and Relevance

### Q1-What comprises novelty in research?

- ◆ demonstration of a well-established phenomenon in a new system
- ◆ testing a hypothesis with no precedent in the literature

### Q2-What comprises relevance in research?

- ◆ important to the matter at hand/useful

# Novelty and Relevance

	Problem/Gap	Novelty/Relevance Problem	Solution	Novelty/relevance Solution
1.	Role of height and school engagement?	Novelty- High Relevance- None	Survey research to establish association.	Novelty- None Relevance- None
2.	Students are disengaged at school.	Novelty- None Relevance- High	Understand their motivations to study.	Novelty- None Relevance- High
3.	Movement control orders and access and equity issues in rural Malaysia	Novelty- High Relevance- High	Explore ways to enhance access and equity	Novelty- High Relevance- High

# RESOLUTE ARGUMENT

## ◆ What is the topic?

*e.g. Students disengaged*

## ◆ Why is the topic important ?

*e.g. Student disengagement leads to academic failure, truancy, delinquency, drug abuse, and psychological disorders.*

## ◆ What is your stance/claim?

*e.g. Social media has a strong role in determining students school engagement.*

## ◆ What is your rationale for this stance?

*The literature on detrimental effect of social media and antecedents of disengagement inform this claim.*



# RESOLUTE ARGUMENT

Clear direction and purpose  
Centered on a *debatable* topic.

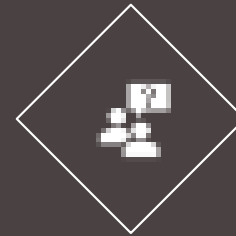
Picks a side.

Makes claims that will be supported  
later in the paper.



# RESOLUTE ARGUMENT

## THE FIRST PART



BEGIN BY  
ARGUING YOUR  
THESIS  
STATEMENT IN  
THE  
INTRODUCTION  
SECTION.



BUILD UP WITH  
RELEVANT  
LITERATURE  
WHICH  
SUPPORTS YOUR  
ARGUMENTS?



CONCLUDE IT  
WITH YOUR  
RESEARCH  
OBJECTIVE OR  
RESEARCH  
QUESTION.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Here we draw conclusions and discuss it.

But how?

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

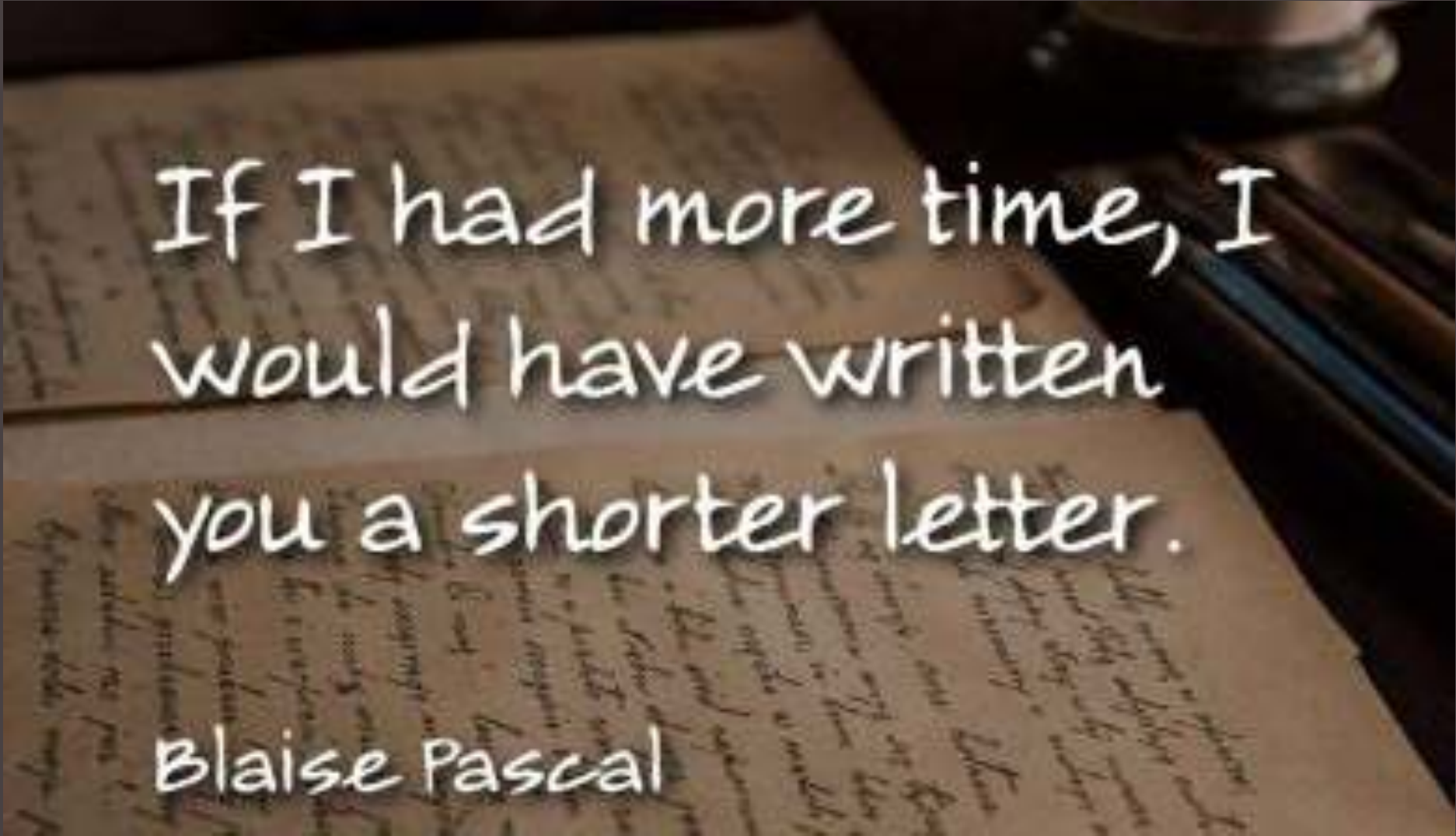


- ◆ Order of most to least important
- ◆ Mention **inconclusive/unexpected results**
- ◆ What the results REALLY mean
- ◆ How has your findings advanced knowledge
- ◆ Application of findings
- ◆ Limitations and suggestions

# ALIGNMENT

<p>What was the issue? 60%</p>	<p>How did you solve it 10%</p>	<p>How good is the solution ? 30%</p>
<p>1. Problem statement 2. Thesis statement 3. Research questions</p>	<p>1. Methodology</p>	<p>1. Relevance of your findings in relation to the problem. 2. What can be done? Implications</p>

# LANGUAGE SKILLS



If I had more time, I  
would have written  
you a shorter letter.

Blaise Pascal

# LANGUAGE SKILLS

- ◆ Academic Language

- ◆ Writing Tight – clear & concise

- ◆ Quality of your thoughts and your arguments.

- ◆ Reduce, Refine or Remove.

# QUESTION TIME





# THANK YOU.



Scopus- 56467750900



Email  
[amrita@uum.edu.my](mailto:amrita@uum.edu.my)



Phone  
upon request