

Book Review

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Agbo, S. (2024). *The Scholars' Publication Sourcebook: Preparing Academic Manuscripts for Humanities and Social Sciences Journals*. Taylor & Francis. 282 pages. \$234.00

Have you ever read a book that lived up to its title on the cover, doing what it promised to do? Agbo's *Scholars' Publication Sourcebook* did what the title says. As a PhD student in Central Asia mandated to publish in a high-impact journal as a graduation requirement, I term Agbo's *Scholars' Publication Sourcebook*, the mother of all graduate students' books. As a novice researcher, I have always wished for a straightforward guide to publishing. Although I understand how to conduct research and have taken numerous academic writing courses, I still struggle to find a clear structure for publishing my articles. The author notes, 'This sourcebook delineates baby steps for gaining confidence in conducting research and publishing. 'After reading *The Scholars' Publication Sourcebook*, I believe it is an essential toolkit for every researcher. This review summarises each chapter and critically assesses the book's content and structure.

As the title, *The Scholars' Publication Sourcebook*, may suggest, this book serves as a thorough step-by-step guide not only for PhD and master's degree students but also for any scholar looking to begin their journey into publication. Publishing an academic article in a peer-reviewed journal is a significant endeavour in an academic career. Many PhD students and newly hired university lecturers report their struggles with publishing academic journal articles. At the core of this book are carefully designed publication strategies based on the author's profound experience. The book contains 12 chapters divided into three parts:

Part 1 consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on structuring a research proposal and its relation to publishing. Chapter 2 provides information about the ethical issues that authors must consider while conducting research and publishing. Finally, Chapter 3 explains how to find an appropriate journal for publication. Part 2 contains two chapters. Both chapters 4 and 5 inform the reader about the five types of articles and provide samples for each type.

Part 3 includes the remaining seven chapters. Chapter 6 details the APA style. Chapter 7 begins with writing practice and teaches how to write the title, title page, and abstract. Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11 outline the writing processes for the introduction, methodology, findings, and discussion, respectively. The final chapter, Chapter 12, covers the processes of peer review and editing.

This book is unique because, although it is not a methodology book, it covers essential information about the preliminary steps in conducting research. For instance, Agbo warns that a researcher should think twice before performing a mixed-method approach rather than a standalone methodology.

In discussing the process of getting published in peer-reviewed journals, Agbo employs concise and clear language, making it easier for novice researchers to understand the fundamentals of publishing. Although Agbo aims to address the needs of postgraduate students from post-Soviet countries, where publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals is a requirement for degree defence, this guidance is undoubtedly beneficial for other students who wish to begin publishing in reputable journals in the fields of social science and humanities, regardless of their location in the world. As the author specified in the preface, the book is truly international, and the problems it addresses affect scholars worldwide.

What is exceptional about the *Scholars' Publication Sourcebook* is its nature, as the author resonates with the problems faced by new scholars. The author recalls his experience as a newly graduated PhD student and his struggles in publishing his first article in a peer-reviewed journal. He provides specific examples of how this experience caused him rejection and stress. It became his most essential publication. That part of the book is very reassuring. Additionally, his current positions as a reviewer for several peer-reviewed journals and as a member of editorial boards provide firsthand insight into the often-overlooked issue of the peer-review process.

Agbo's 20 or more years of teaching research methods worldwide have given him a global perspective relevant to scholars worldwide. He was right to observe that very few research books concentrate on publishing an article in a recognised journal.

There are official Research Ethics Boards (REBs) in most developed countries; however, this is not the case in many developing nations, where students often have a vague understanding of academic integrity and ethical considerations.

Agbo dedicates an entire chapter to this issue, explaining the nuances of maintaining ethical standards in the conduct and publication of research. The sample contract letter inviting participants and the sample consent form are valuable for scholars in countries without a Research Ethics Board, making it easy to follow and adapt for any research.

The study questions at the end of each chapter offer practical and thought-provoking insights for article writers. After the study questions, readers can apply theoretical knowledge to practical steps in their research field. The first chapter of the Scholars' Publication Sourcebook skilfully and succinctly outlines all the significant steps in conducting research. While many graduate students enrol in lengthy courses on Educational Research, Agbo condenses what is worth knowing and remembering into about 10 pages.

Another distinctive aspect of the Scholar's Publication Sourcebook is its ability to sustain readers' attention and encourage them to read continuously. By signposting what comes next, Agbo keeps the readers' attention focused by providing a summary at the beginning of each part and recapping the chapters' main points after every section.

Beginning with Chapter 4, the author showcases his recently published articles as examples of works suitable for publication in peer-reviewed journals. The article samples he provided demonstrate his current understanding of contemporary publishing requirements and his practical experience in publishing articles. Agbo presents the samples of his article in sections, giving detailed explanations for each part. The samples are very beneficial for researchers at various stages of their work.

In Chapter 6, Agbo presents useful tables featuring specific phrases to help avoid bias, as well as a table illustrating examples of APA style errors. The tables assist writers in recognising common mistakes and include citation patterns, making them accessible for visual learners.

The checklists in Chapter 10 are valuable tools for self-review before submitting the manuscript to the journal.

With his experience in peer-reviewing multiple journals, Agbo outlines the editorial process in Chapter 12, advising researchers to be patient while waiting for feedback from the journal. He illustrated the entire process in Figure 12.1, clarifying it for the reader. He effectively conveys his understanding of the reader as a novice researcher by recalling his experience of being rejected from

a journal he later joined as a consulting editor. The clarification enhances the author's reliability and trustworthiness. He also encourages the reader not to give up on rejected manuscripts by asking, "If a journal rejects a manuscript, is it the end of that manuscript?" (p. 250). The answer to this question is a three-letter word, "Not" (p. 250), the shortest sentence in the book. It speaks volumes to readers as what follows resonates with the experiences of rookie writers. Agbo provided hope and inspiration for rejected manuscripts, offering the example of his own first rejection. He made it clear that authors should not take rejections personally and should focus on the reasons for the rejection, reworking the manuscripts for resubmission. Agbo informed new scholars that rejections are a standard practice in peer-reviewed journals. He outlines specific steps that writers can follow when receiving a rejection. He explained why a journal rejects manuscripts and advised authors on what to do when they receive a rejection. Likewise, Agbo advises authors on what to do with accepted manuscripts.

While it was challenging to identify any flaws in the published book, as a PhD student, I have some issues that are dear to me, which I would like Agbo to address in a second edition of the book. First, in Chapter 3, Agbo presents a situation by naming the country. I want Agbo to use pseudonyms or anonymity for countries to avoid tarnishing their reputation in the scholarly community. Secondly, I would like the author to divide the types of articles into separate chapters to help the reader focus on one specific kind of article at a time. This way, the author can prevent study questions from becoming crowded at the end of Chapters 4 and 5. Thirdly, in Chapter 6, the author addresses the issue of plagiarism. Moving this to the Ethical Considerations section would be more suitable, as it discusses potential consequences akin to disregarding ethical standards. Finally, in chapter 8, I would like the author to provide examples for each hook, so the reader has a sample to follow.

Finally, while I found this book extremely useful for preparing my manuscripts and dividing my PhD thesis into several articles in a second edition, I would like the author to demonstrate how one can utilise a PhD thesis for publication by providing an example of a real PhD thesis and showing how the student can divide it into several manuscripts. By following my suggestions, the author would enhance a second edition of the book.

As a follow-up step, I would like Agbo to collaborate with PhD students and young researchers to participate in an empirical

research experiment investigating the effects of the current book on the publication of articles after participants have read it. Knowing the book's impact on writers would demonstrate its effectiveness and enhance its popularity in the academic world.

To conclude, this book is a valuable source for understanding and navigating the complex world of academic publishing. It belongs on the shelves of all graduate students, new scholars, and instructors who work with students to prepare journal articles, theses, or dissertations. The suggestions I offered for a second edition are minor limitations that do not detract from a well-thought-out, well-written, and well-conceived book.

Reference

- Agbo, S. (2024). *The Scholars' Publication Sourcebook: Preparing Academic Manuscripts for Journals in the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Taylor & Francis.
<https://www.routledge.com/The-Scholars-Publication-Sourcebook-Preparing-Academic-Manuscripts-for-Journals-in-the-Humanities-and-Social-Sciences/Agbo/p/book/9781032932491?srsId=AfmBOoDI5am-18Hc5m0TFIOFbjvybZcjNxAc2ocR7EoHh6fItKIF4gu>

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