

MY EXPERIENCE AS AN INTERN REVIEWER



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I had not imagined myself being a reviewer. I have not been a straight-out book/reading person, but thanks to the Editor-in-Chief, AJFAND – Prof. Ruth Oniang'o – for giving me the chance. I have progressively developed a reading culture which has helped me realize my potential as a reviewer. My initial idea of what being a reviewer entailed has since been challenged. I thought it was all about ensuring that papers meet the AJFAND publication standards, comparing notes from other peer reviewers, and checking if the authors addressed all comments or made corrections according to other reviewers' recommendations. For some time, that was all I did, until one day, I came across a paper that was full of grammatical errors. That was when I realized that there was much more to the reviewing process considering the research paper's clarity, originality and scientific accuracy. In life, learning is continuous, and in my experience as a reviewer, I have learnt and continue to learn among other things:

- That reviewing requires a lot of patience. A reviewer must take time to go through the article, understand what message the author is trying to pass, and provide recommendations where necessary. Considering the number of reviewers for a specific article, the author might have to make numerous changes to their article before it is finally considered fit for publishing.
- Through reviewing, I have also learnt how to write a research paper, considering the key components of the paper.
- Reviewing has helped enhance my knowledge as I often come across new information regarding Nutrition and Agriculture. Some of the research papers I have gone through provide evidence or a clear understanding of certain practices in nutrition. For example, research was done to develop a nutritious complementary meal/porridge that consisted of yellow maize, sorghum, millet, soybean, groundnut, crayfish and fish flours. The study showed that this product was high in protein, carbohydrate and micronutrient content with a minimal amount of tannins and phytates that would not cause a negative effect on iron and zinc. Normally, a mixture of more than three flours is discouraged when preparing complementary porridge to avoid antinutrient effects that may occur. However, this study showed that some flours may be used to provide a nutrient-rich complementary porridge. Also, school feeding programmes are a great way to reduce hunger and malnutrition among school-aged children. I was impressed by a product development article where energy-dense peanut butter biscuits were developed to provide morning snacks for children in a South African primary school.
- Reviewing has exposed me to various topics and ideas I would have never known otherwise, and gives me ideas of possible future research and career development engagements. For instance, I have gained insight into just how important investment in agriculture is to reduce poverty and food insecurity in Africa at large. I am looking forward to acquiring more knowledge, writing skills and reviewer expertise through this process.

It's been an honour gaining mentorship from the AJFAND editorial team, with Prof. Ruth Oniang'o as the Editor-in-Chief. Prof. Oniang'o is firm and determined to uphold AJFAND's quality standards. From her, I have learnt the importance of decisiveness in leadership. After a thorough review of each article, a decision has to be made on whether or not it is fit for publishing, which also requires a reviewer's input. I have also learnt to be keen to details as small as full stops, commas, titles and sub-titles and references.

I have had pleasure working with and learning much from Emily Kaveza, AJFAND's Editorial Assistant. She walked me through the basics of reviewing papers, from ensuring the papers met the journal's guidelines using the checklist provided, to editing and providing my recommendations. From her, I've also learnt that clear and constant communication with the authors concerning the progress of their papers is key to avoid any misunderstanding.

It's also been a pleasure working with Michael Okumu, AJFAND's Technical Manager who gives administrative support and demonstrates exemplary ICT skills. I turn to his help whenever my computer (software or hardware) has issues. Mr. Okumu ensures the papers are formatted and published online for easy access of the public. I have also experienced working hand in hand with him in ensuring DOI registrations for the published papers, which is an added skill. I have realized the importance of team work in the publishing process and appreciate the effort contributed by each member of the team.

I have enjoyed working in this friendly work-environment that provides diverse learning opportunities from personal development to the acquisition of other skills.

