



From Field Notes to Publishable Papers



Internship Writeshop Report

Lake Elementaita Mountain Lodge, Naivasha

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Internship Write - Shop Report

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Introduction and Objective

This report presents the proceedings of the internship writeshop organized by The ACTS Academy, in collaboration with the Climate Resilient Economies (CRE) Programme. The objective was to enhance the capacity of ACTS research interns in effective writing, particularly in developing research proposals and drafting manuscripts for submission to peer-reviewed journals. The programme focused on the essential elements of scholarly writing, including problem definition, methodology, data analysis, and crafting discussions and conclusions.

A total of seven research interns and one research assistant participated in the four-day training, representing various ACTS programmes including Climate Resilient Economies (CRE), Science, Technology and Innovation, Knowledge and Society (STIKS), Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security (AFNS), and Gender, Youth and Inclusive Development (GYID). By the end of the writeshop, each participant was expected to produce a complete manuscript draft and submit it to the journal. The training also aimed to promote peer learning, strengthen mentor-mentee relationships, and create a supportive environment for professional development.

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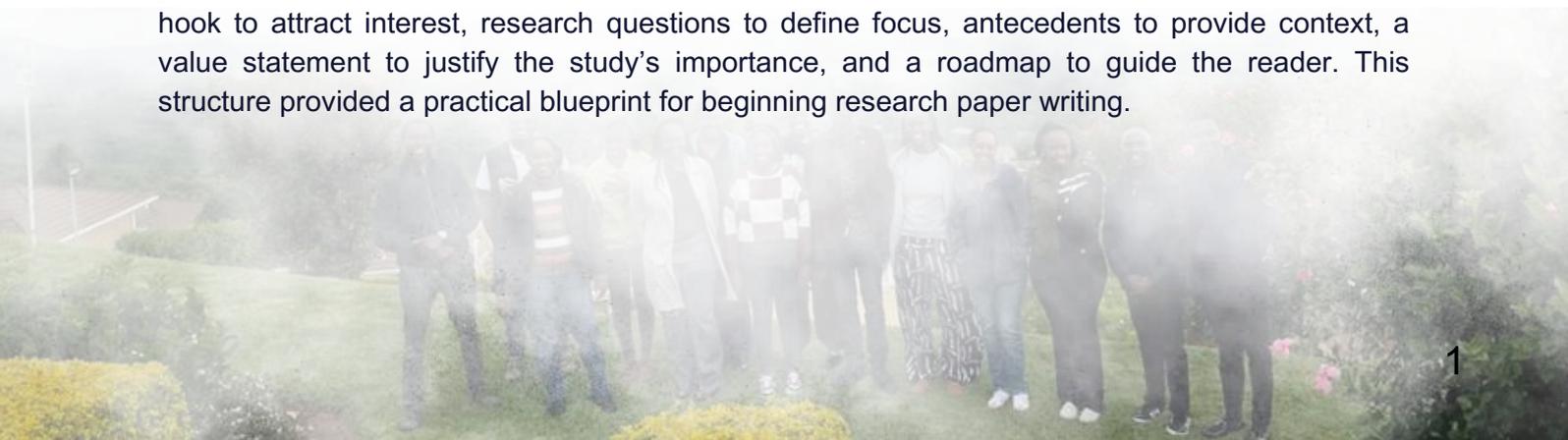
Workshop Sessions Summary

2.1 Framing the Research

On the first day, framing a study involves articulating the research problem and objectives. Dr. Ruth Wambui facilitated the session and guided the participants on identifying research gaps that could be empirical, conceptual, contextual, methodological, or disciplinary. The session also explored how to differentiate between research objectives where the general objectives provide an overarching purpose, and the specific objectives offer measurable directions for the study.

A well-structured literature review incorporates theoretical, empirical, and conceptual frameworks to support research justification. The session emphasized the importance of logical flow and clarity in early sections of a manuscript. Dr. Ruth made a concluding statement, "Start with curiosity, build with clarity, and finish with confidence. A proposal is a plan and a promise to search for truth," which set the tone for the rest of the writeshop.

Later in the day, Dr. Joel led a session on the concepts of introduction that include the global to local context, offering a background to the study. It also answers the how and why, the scope, context and significance, generally highlighting the concrete reason for a study. In addition, the participants were introduced to the "Introduction Formula," which includes five components: a hook to attract interest, research questions to define focus, antecedents to provide context, a value statement to justify the study's importance, and a roadmap to guide the reader. This structure provided a practical blueprint for beginning research paper writing.



2.2 Methodology Selection

The second day centred on developing the methodology section and looking at the data analysis framework. Dr. Kevin Ouko facilitated the first session, which provided a comprehensive guide to describing research procedures. The participants learned that the methodology should clearly explain the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods, instruments used, and ethical considerations. The session emphasized the importance of writing in sufficient detail to allow for the study's replication.

Dr. Eric Magale supported the session by reinforcing the connection between methodology and research objectives. Participants were encouraged to move away from vague statements like "data was collected", but rather provide precise information on how, when, and with what tools the data were gathered. The facilitators also advised reviewing author guidelines from target journals to ensure alignment with publishing standards.

2.3 Data Analysis Framework

A session on data analysis and interpretation led by Dr. Eric focused on transforming raw data into meaningful insights. For quantitative research, participants were introduced to descriptive and inferential statistics, including tools like SPSS, R, and Excel. Discussion also looked into analytical techniques such as means, t-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis. For qualitative research, the session covered thematic and content analysis, coding, and pattern recognition in data. NVivo, among other tools, was introduced as a software tool to support qualitative analysis. Participants also explored how to describe the rationale behind the selected analytical methods. The session pointed out the Arksey and O'Malley framework for scoping reviews and the PRISMA-ScR checklist for reporting evidence synthesis. Emphasis was placed on the importance of documenting search strategies, study selection criteria, and the use of PRISMA flow diagrams for transparency.

2.4 Discussion and Conclusion

On the third day, the focus shifted to crafting the discussion and conclusion sections. The participants were led by Maureen Kabasa on the structure, strategy and style of a discussion and conclusion section of a research paper. The role of the discussion section in interpreting findings and situating them within the broader research landscape was discussed.

Of significance here is to avoid rewriting the results section. The core elements that guide this section include; summarizing key findings, placing them in a context, mentioning and discussing the implications of any unexpected results, addressing any limitations or weaknesses in the study, providing a brief look at potential follow-up studies and ensuring the conclusion restates the most significant findings and their implications, and where applicable, offers a call to action

2.5 Finalization and Presentation

On the final day, Dr. Joel Onyango guided participants through the process of integrating all sections into a cohesive manuscript. The participants presented their draft manuscript to the group, followed by reflections from facilitators and peers. The write-shop concluded with a feedback session and discussion of next steps, including submission timelines, further mentorship, and opportunities for collaboration.

The photos below highlight key moments from the four-day write-shop, capturing training sessions by various facilitators, sampled content and mentorship sessions.

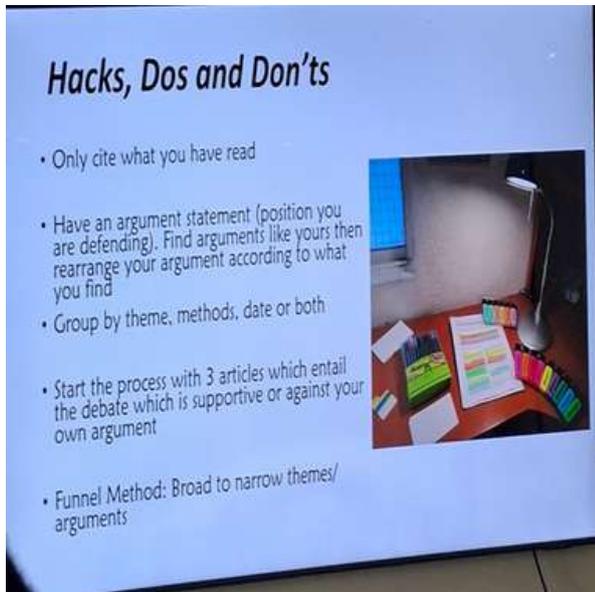


Figure 1: Tips on Citation



Figure 2: Methodology Framework session led by Dr. Eric Magale



Figure 3: An individual writing and mentor session



Figure 4: Q&A Session led by Dr. Ruth Wainaina



Figure 5: Discussion and conclusion session led by Maureen Kabasa



Figure 6: Cersey Ochieng leading the Journal Submission Session

2.6 Iteration Factor

This was brought out by every facilitator, where participants were encouraged to write the different sections, especially the introduction, first, but then read and edit them every time they compose other parts of the paper.

Following each section over the four days, the participants were given time in the afternoon and evening to make changes and improvements to the different sections and each needed to present the improvements to the team the next day in the morning. This ensured a continued iterative process of the drafts towards publishable papers. All modules presented in slides and other supporting literature resources were made available to participants as resource materials in soft copies.

3.0 Key Highlights

3.1 Journal Submission Guidelines and Editorial Standards

The participants were introduced to journal submission requirements in a session facilitated by Cersey Ochieng, Associate Editor at the Pan African Science Journal (PASJ). This session focused on explaining the publishing process and offering a clear understanding of editorial expectations.

The common elements required by journals include word limits, citation styles, referencing formats, and manuscript structure. The importance of originality and ethical standards in research paper writing was emphasized, with special attention given to avoiding plagiarism. Cersey provided practical tips on how to prepare a manuscript for submission, including the formatting of titles and abstracts, proper use of keywords, and structuring the conclusion to match the scope of the study.

The tools used by editors and reviewers, such as similarity detection software like iThenticate and the PASJ submission management platform, were introduced. To give interns a concrete reference, Cersey shared a sample journal template from PASJ, which participants were encouraged to use as a formatting guide. This session was particularly impactful in bridging the gap between research writing and the realities of publishing.

3.2 Facilitator's Observations

They observed that participants were highly engaged and eager to improve their write-ups. The iterative approach used, which involved drafting, reviewing, and revising, helped the participants gain a deeper understanding of writing publishable papers. Peer learning was particularly effective, as participants learned from one another's feedback and experiences.

They recommended increasing focus on analysis in future write-shops, including dedicated training sessions for statistical demonstrations and qualitative coding. This stems from observations where some interns experienced challenges when selecting appropriate data analysis techniques and polishing their methodologies, for instance, when dealing with mixed methods or literature-based designs. Notably, participants valued individual feedback sessions and would benefit from more time with mentors. There was a shared suggestion to extend the write-shop by an additional day to accommodate further revision and allow more time for feedback.

3.3 Participants' Feedback Assessment

The participants' appreciation of the impact of the write-shop was not only expressed emotionally through an end-of-the-write-shop discussion forum, but also through a Mentimeter evaluation. The evaluation captured participant experiences across several dimensions. Ten participants responded, using a scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Its purpose is to gain feedback, improve future training sessions, and ensure all the voices are heard. Most participants found the program very packed and would have preferred a longer period for the training as compared to the four days.

The average ratings were as follows:

No	Attribute Evaluated	Average Score
1	Suitability of training objectives	3.7
2	Pace of the training sessions	3.8
3	Facilitators preparedness and effectiveness	4.2
4	Relevance and quality of training materials	4.8
5	Level of participant engagement	4.6

Other Comments and Suggestions

At the end of the writeshop, participants were asked to describe their experience in one word. The responses, visualized in the word cloud below, highlight the key themes that emerged.



Figure 7: Word cloud of participants' one-word reflections on the internship writeshop experience

All the participants felt comfortable handling all the writing tasks. However there were sentiments discussed on how to improve training sessions where they stipulated they needed more time related to the training especially for data analysis, more sessions in the future, the participants said that they needed more time to prepare for the drafts they were improving during the write shop, focus on a more hands on approach with the mentors including more coaches for a more personal feel.

The place chosen was rather cold; the participants said a warmer environment should be considered next time. Despite these observations, the general feeling was that the writeshop was a valuable and transformative experience.

4.0

Conclusion and Recommendations

The internship writeshop successfully achieved its objective of strengthening the research and writing capacity of the research interns. Over four days, participants were taken through essential components of research writing and supported in developing their manuscripts through structured sessions, mentor feedback, and peer engagement. By the end of the writeshop, each intern had made significant progress on their draft and demonstrated improved confidence and clarity in communicating their work.

Beyond the technical skills gained, the sessions created a space for learning, reflection, and collaboration. The interactive means of operating, combining guided facilitation, independent writing time, and peer discussions, proved effective in supporting participants at various stages of their research journeys.

Nonetheless, the experience also surfaced important areas for growth and follow-up. One of the key proposals from participants was the establishment of a mentorship caucus, a space for interns and relevant ACTS staff to meet regularly and discuss progress, challenges, and emerging ideas. This caucus would support ongoing learning beyond the writeshop and create opportunities for collaboration and a symbiotic kind of accountability.

The participants additionally aim at working on a synthesis paper which captures shared experiences and insights from their internship work experiences. Each research intern would contribute a brief section, approximately two pages, describing their project focus, lessons learned, and key reflections. These contributions would then be synthesized into a shared paper, with a thematic analysis and a collective results section. A guiding template for this paper will be developed and shared to ensure consistency and coordination.

The value of co-authorship was also emphasized. The participants acknowledged that joint writing efforts, especially those guided by more experienced staff, can help sharpen research writing skills, encourage collaboration across ACTS programmes, and support professional growth. Opportunities for interns to co-author outputs, particularly those aligned with ACTS projects or thematic areas, should be prioritized moving forward.

To strengthen internal learning, it was also recommended that future training sessions, like those on data analysis, be linked to the ACTS Pathways Academy. Interns as well as other staff members would benefit from accessing curated learning modules on key research tools and methods, complemented by live sessions and mentor guidance.

In terms of the development of a mentorship system, participants suggested that mentor allocation be guided by a structured ratio. Interns should be allowed to indicate preferred mentors based on project relevance and learning interests during orientation or early training sessions. This would ensure more meaningful mentor-mentee relationships and improve the overall support system.

Finally, stronger communication between interns and ACTS teams was highlighted as a key enabler for success. Interns proposed more frequent engagement with staff working on related projects and thematic areas, including opportunities to join team meetings or contribute to joint deliverables. Being involved would deepen their understanding of the broader institutional context and enhance their sense of contribution.

In conclusion, the writeshop was a transformative experience for the participants. The recommendations presented here point to the importance of structured mentorship, collaborative outputs, and follow-up engagement that continues well beyond an individual event. Implementing these ideas will improve future writeshops and also strengthen the overall impact and continuity of the ACTS internship programme.

Annexes

1. List of Participants

No	Participants	ACTS Programme	Email
1	Anne Maina	CRE	amaina@acts-net.org
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4	Ursulla Wandili	CRE	unekesa@acts-net.org
5	Tiffany Njoroge	STIKS	tnjoroge@acts-net.org
6	Joyce Gathaci	STIKS	jgathaci@acts-net.org
7	Patience Mebo	AFNS	pochieng@acts-net.org
8	Samwel Oyugi	GYID	soriwo@acts-net.org

2. List of Facilitators

No	Facilitators	Programme/Institution	Email
1	Eric Magale	CRE	emagale@acts-net.org
2	Joel Onyango	CRE	jonyango@acts-net.org
3	Maureen Kabasa	CRE	m.kabasa@acts-net.org
4	Ruth Wambui	CRE	rwainaina@acts-net.org
5	Kevin Ouko	STIKS	kouko@acts-net.org
6	Cersey Ochieng	PASJ	cerseyochieng@gmail.com



Annexes

3. Writeshop Programme

Time	Session	Facilitator
Day 1 – Structuring the Paper: From Introduction to Literature		
09:00 – 10:30	The Introduction Formula	Dr. Ruth Wambui
	Practical – Drafting the Introduction Section	
10:30 – 11:00	Health Break	
11:00 – 13:00	Literature Review Techniques	Dr. Eric Magale
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break	
14:00 – 16:00	Independent Writing & Feedback	All
Day 2 – Interpreting Results and Analysis Techniques		
09:00 – 10:30	Methodology Essentials	Dr. Kevin Ouko
	Results Interpretation	
10:30–11:00	Health Break	
10:30 – 12:00	Quantitative & Qualitative Analysis Techniques	Dr. Eric Magale
	Writing the Findings and Analysis Sections	
12:00 – 13:00	Journal Insights	Cersey Ochieng
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break	
14:00 – 16:00	Peer Review & Structured Revisions	All
Day 3 – Strengthening the Argument and Discussion		
09:00 – 10:30	Discussion & Conclusion	Maureen Kabasa
	Making a Case for Research - Theory	
10:30–11:00	Health Break	
11:00 – 11:30	Argument- Building Techniques	
11:30 – 13:00	Practical – Drafting Discussions and Conclusions	Maureen Kabasa
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break	
14:00 – 16:00	Writing Labs: Revisions and Consultations	All
Day 4 – Polishing and Presenting the Paper		
09:00 – 10:30	Practice–Iterative Writing and Integration	Dr. Joel Onyango
10:30 – 11:00	Health Break	
11:00 – 13:00	Practical–Finalizing Drafts& Preparing Presentations	
13:00–14:00	Lunch Break	
14:00 – 16:00	R. Participants' Presentations & R.F. Feedback	
16:00 – 16:30	Closing Reflections and Next Steps	



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