

Time for a discussion about discussion articles

Roger Watson

We periodically review the categories of article we publish in JAN which, of course, influences the types of manuscript we expect to be submitted. In recent years, we have expanded the categories of article but occasionally we remove some. This does not happen without prolonged consideration followed by detailed discussion with the management team, which includes all the editors and Wiley colleagues assigned to JAN. One example of such a decision was the discontinuation of articles reporting translations of psychometric instruments; a more recent case was to discontinue publishing articles on concept analysis. These decisions were both taken after careful analysis of the use of published articles. There are, essentially, three things that we hope happen to a published article: first, that it gets read; second, it gets downloaded; and third, it gets cited. Of course, these categories are neither mutually exclusive nor do they all happen to all articles. The fourth alternative is one that an article is not read, downloaded or cited. Unfortunately, this does happen, and our annual analyses reveal the patterns. Over the years, we observed that instrument translations were not being used by readers, nor were concept analyses—both with very few exceptions—and now we notice that discussion articles follow the same pattern. Therefore, we have decided to discontinue this category of article and will no longer be accepting discussion papers. Naturally, our discussions are not confined to data on reads, downloads and citations—we also consider the reasons for the lack of interest in types of article and what, if any, the alternatives could be. In the case of discussion articles, the history is that these replaced the old non-systematic narrative reviews, which have very little currency in the era of systematic reviewing. Nevertheless, we noted that many people were reporting systematic searches and even including PRISMA flowcharts with discussion articles. Discussion articles already fell under the category of evidence synthesis and so our advice to authors considering a discussion paper is to consider further whether their manuscript can be presented as a proper systematic review. Failing that, if they really were considering a narrative piece then would the readership be better served by an editorial presenting the main points and references. Our experience is that good, controversial editorials are well read and well cited. Finally, our decision to discontinue discussion articles does not affect those that come under the methodology section of JAN; these will now simply be described as 'Methodology' articles—changes that will be reflected in our guidelines for authors.

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