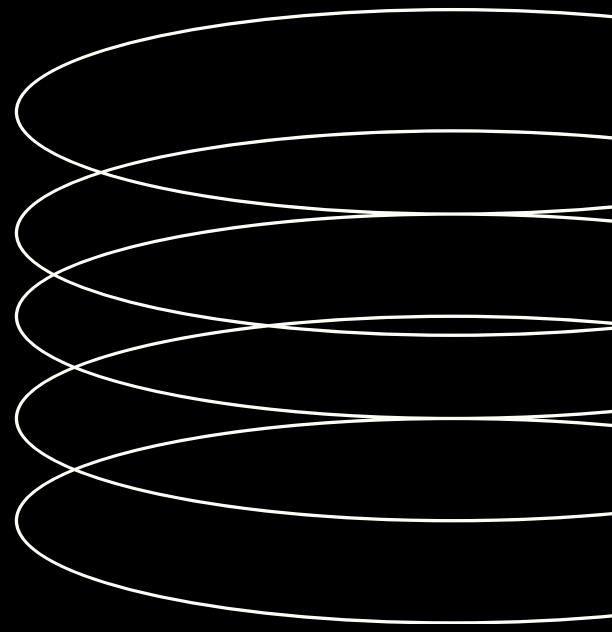

A Guide for Journalists and PR Specialists to Report Research Findings

Connecting Brands with Audiences





The Author

About Hezron Insights

No matter your experience, there's always something new to learn and ways to improve. **"Hezron Insights"** provides you with the tools and resources to elevate your Public Relations, Leadership, and Life Skills.

Hezron Ochiel,
Hezron Insight,
Nairobi, Kenya.
info@hezroninsights.com
www.hezroninsights.com



www.hezroninsights.com

Introduction

This guide is essential for reporters, including journalists, bloggers, and communication specialists aiming to distill scholarly findings into accessible insights for the public. Scholarly research often presents complex ideas in scientific jargon, authored by experts to share discoveries, advance knowledge, and enhance human well-being. Policymakers frequently rely on these findings to inform crucial decisions, yet many lack a scientific background and benefit from interpretations that translate complex data into actionable insights.

While journalists, bloggers, and PR professionals have numerous sources for news, scholarly articles offer rich narratives that resonate deeply with their audiences. For instance, a study on community health patterns can empower residents to make informed lifestyle choices. Failing to report such crucial research would deny communities the opportunity to improve their well-being.

In this guide, drawing from my years of experience reporting on research findings, I'll outline a step-by-step approach to effectively communicate these insights to a broader audience.



Finding And Interpreting Research

When I began my career as a freelance journalist some years ago, I discovered that covering scholarly articles was a fascinating beat. Freelancers are typically compensated per published article, and travel expenses can be prohibitive. This is where journal articles and science news websites prove invaluable. Simply visiting major sites and subscribing to their updates is sufficient. As a health and climate change reporter, I cultivated relationships with journals like [PLOS One](#), [Nature](#), [The Lancet](#), [Science](#), and others, which proved enormously beneficial.



What are academic journals?

An academic journal is a periodical publication that regularly features scholarly articles and research findings in a specific field of study. These journals are authored by and targeted towards academics, researchers, and professionals. Their primary purpose is to disseminate new research, advance knowledge across various disciplines, and facilitate the critical exchange of ideas and findings.

Academic journals serve different purposes and cater to specific audiences within the scholarly community. They include Original Research articles, authored by the researchers conducting the study and typically subjected to peer review before publication. Other academic journals include Case Studies, Retrospective Studies, Methodology Studies, Review Articles, and, much more.

In the interest of this guide, I will focus on peer-reviewed academic journals. Peer review involves the evaluation of an article by experts in the same field who assess its quality and validity. Based on their evaluation, they recommend whether the article should be accepted for publication or rejected based on the journal's standards and criteria.



How do you find academic research?

a) Journals: The internet is awash with various types of journals and the easiest way to find one is by conducting an online search. While some have paywalls, where one has to pay before gaining access, others are freely available via open source. You can still gain access to the paid versions. Universities and other institutions of higher learning have access to these paid journals. One only needs to enroll with them and gain access to these publications.

b) Google Scholar: Google Scholar is a freely available academic search engine provided by Google. To get a scholarly published article in Google Scholar, follow these steps:

- Click on Google Scholar, enter the article title, and click search.
- If available, it will appear among the top search results.



Reading And Interpreting Research



Hezron Insights
Connecting Brands with Audiences

www.hezroninsights.com

a) Read carefully

- To efficiently read academic papers, start by clarifying your objective to focus your attention. Begin with a quick scan of the abstract, introduction, and conclusion to grasp the main ideas.
- Review figures and tables to understand the data visually. Dive deeper into the introduction for context, skim the methods section unless crucial details are needed, focus on the results section, and analyze the discussion for broader implications.
- Take notes and highlight key points, use reference management tools like EndNote or Mendeley, and refer to review articles for comprehensive overviews. Engage in peer discussions to enhance understanding, and stay updated by following leading journals and researchers in your field.
- If you encounter technical jargon that is difficult to understand, keep a dictionary or access the internet for definitions.
- If these resources are insufficient, consider consulting an expert in the same field or contacting the author directly (contact details are usually provided in the research paper) for clarification.

b) Assess newsworthiness

- Ask yourself questions such as, what new insights does the research offer? How does it resonate with your audience? If the research doesn't present novel findings or cover a well-trodden topic, it may not be worth pursuing. However, if it introduces a fresh perspective, it merits consideration. Assessing relevance is crucial—does it align with what your audience typically engages with?
- Determine if it fits your publication's scope or ties into current events. For instance, research on the impacts of recent global floods could be timely and newsworthy. Similarly, studies emerging during significant global events may capture public interest and relevance. For example, a study finding released during the World Climate Change forum may be newsy.

Preparing To Extract a Story

When evaluating a story's potential, consider its relevance and impact on your audience, the novelty of the information it presents, and how it relates to real-life experiences or individuals.

Simplify complex concepts to enhance clarity, provide background information for context, and incorporate direct quotes and data to bolster your narrative. Lastly, explore the broader implications and potential future impacts to create a compelling and informative story.



Step One

Interviewing the lead researcher is crucial for clarifying issues and concepts. Telephone calls, face-to-face, and email interviews can be particularly effective as they allow for follow-up questions.

When conducting a telephone interview, make sure to ask for permission to record the conversation. Based on experience, some researchers speak quickly or use complex terms, which can cause you to miss important details. Recording the interview allows you to replay it and ensure you catch everything.

Here are some key questions to consider:

1. Could you explain your main findings?
2. What is innovative or groundbreaking about your research?
3. Can you outline your methodology?
4. Based on your findings, what areas of policy should be prioritized?

Step Two

Interview independent experts within the same field of study, such as university professors, senior government officials, and specialists in the civil society or private sectors to corroborate the findings. Independent specialists can guide you through the study's design, pointing out limitations and biases. They will interpret the data, assist with calculations, and help determine the study's significance. It's crucial to maintain an independent perspective to enhance credibility.

Each brings a unique perspective: professors provide academic experience, policymakers offer views on policy implications, while civil society or private sector actors contribute practical perspectives on implementing and scaling up findings.

In addition to discussing the policy implications of your study, interviewing a government official helps localize your story, making it more relatable for your audience. Including all these viewpoints enriches your article with diverse perspectives and depth of understanding.



Article | [Open access](#) |
Published: 13 May 2014

The effectiveness of coral reefs for coastal hazard risk reduction and adaptation

[Filippo Ferrario](#), [Michael W. Beck](#) , ... [Laura Airoidi](#) [+ Show authors](#)

[Nature Communications](#) **5**,

Article number: 3794 (2014) | [Cite this article](#)

58k Accesses | **975** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

Abstract

The world's coastal zones are experiencing rapid development and an



Sample Case Study

To better illustrate this concept, let's refer to a study I published previously titled, "[The Effectiveness of Coral Reefs for coastal hazard risk reduction and Adaptation](#)."

Here are some questions I asked and the responses I received from the following experts:

Expert one: Interview Questions & Responses

Q1: What adaptive measures can be adopted to reverse the trend?

A: Reducing overall global warming pollution is essential to minimize ocean temperature increase. However, minimizing other impacts not directly related to global warming can improve the ability of these sensitive ecosystems to withstand the duress of global warming. Improving watershed management of nearby lands. Research is needed to develop new practices and technologies that can mitigate global warming.

Q2: Some researchers suggest that coral reefs could provide defense for coastal regions around the globe. What do you think needs to be done to adopt these methods?

A: Establish and strengthen local and national policies and programs to improve coastal water quality and protect reef-dependent watersheds. Expand marine protected areas around reefs and collaborate with other nations to promote such efforts in their regions. Increase funding for coral reef research and restoration. Discourage trade in marine species that have been captured through damaging or unsustainable techniques.

Q3: As an expert in the field, what challenges have hampered Kenya's efforts to conserve its coastline?

A: Lack of investment in research that can develop new practices and technologies that can conserve the coastline. Policies that can create an enabling environment for conservation are lacking. Poor enforcement of existing rules that guide coastal conservation practices.

Q4: Additionally, are there any other issues you would like to be addressed in the article?

A: Scientific consensus indicates that greenhouse gas emissions need to start falling before 2020 to avoid global temperature rises above the level at which the devastating effects of climate change will cause irreversible damage, including the submersion of low-lying islands and coastal cities.



Expert Two: Interview Questions & Responses

Q1: Do you think Kenya is prepared for any possible submersion? What needs to be done?

A: No, Kenya is making significant efforts in adaptation, but it is not sufficiently prepared for issues arising from sea level rise, storm surges, and flooding. Efforts in adaptation – including research – have been focusing more on semi-arid areas and agriculture so far.

Q2: What adaptive measures can be adopted to reverse the trend?

A: By carrying out a comprehensive vulnerability assessment, not limited to sea level rise projections. Better participatory urban planning, and better drainage facilities, in particular in informal settlement areas. Policies and interventions that allow and enable people to relocate from particularly vulnerable areas, or areas where urbanization prevents natural coastal dynamics.

Q3: Some researchers suggest that coral reefs could provide defense for coastal regions around the globe. What do you think needs to be done to adopt these methods?

A: I agree with this position. Coral reefs and mangroves are natural protection/buffer zones. However, coral reefs are ecosystems that are extremely sensitive to changing chemical and temperature parameters of the seawater, some of them related to climate change. There are no efficient engineering solutions to combat the degradation of coral reefs. The best way to facilitate coral restoration and growth would be a large-scale ecosystem-based approach to adaptation and natural resource management, regulating the flow of sediments and pollutants, fisheries, and tourism activities that directly impact the reefs at a local scale.

Q4: As an expert in the field, what challenges have hampered Kenya's efforts to conserve our coastline?

A: The absence of clear legislation on the land property and on the rights and regulations to build and conduct economic activities along the coast, in particular in tourism and trade hubs. The absence of a plan for inclusive economic development that can encourage communities to move out from key vulnerable areas reverses the trend of encroachment of river banks, wetlands, and low-lying coastal areas. The insufficient education and capacity building on the importance of the conservation of key regulatory ecosystem services.



Writing The Story

When writing, start with a compelling headline that highlights the study's most significant finding or impact to capture readers' attention. For example: [Coral reef restoration can save lives, livelihoods.](#)



Hezron Insights
Connecting Brands with Audiences

www.hezroninsights.com

A) THE LEAD:

In the lead, provide a concise summary of the study's primary discovery, addressing the who, what, when, where, why, and how. For example: "A new report suggests that preserving and restoring coral reefs may be one of the cheapest and most effective ways to mitigate coastal erosion and flooding. "Coral reefs can be an effective first line of defense and these benefits are important for many nations," say the report's authors.

B) THE BODY:

The body of the article should explore the study in greater depth, covering the research methods, key results, and broader implications. Incorporate quotes from the researchers, pertinent statistics, and comparisons to earlier research. It is important to give direct quotes of the researcher in an article to accurately convey their expertise, perspective, and the nuances of their findings.

In addition, provide additional resource materials from similar studies to validate your article.

For example: "A report by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has also warned that parts of the Kenyan coast could submerge in two decades as a result of rising ocean levels."

C) CONCLUSION:

Conclude by highlighting the research's importance, potential future directions, and any recommendations or calls to action derived from the study's outcomes. Use direct quotes from the researcher.

Additional Materials

The following websites provide journalists & PR professionals access to a wide range of scholarly articles across various disciplines, helping them find reliable sources and information for their reporting.

- **PubMed Central (PMC):** A free full-text archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature. [PubMed Central](#).
- **Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ):** Provides free, full-text access to quality-controlled scientific and scholarly journals. [DOAJ](#)
- **Public Library of Science (PLOS):** A nonprofit open-access publisher of peer-reviewed scientific and medical research. [PLOS](#).
- **BioMed Central (BMC):** A portfolio of open-access journals across all areas of biology and medicine. [BioMed Central](#).
- **arXiv:** A repository of electronic preprints (e-prints) approved for publication after moderation. Often used for physics, mathematics, computer science, quantitative biology, and related disciplines. [arXiv](#).
- **Social Science Research Network (SSRN):** A repository of scholarly research in the social sciences and humanities. [SSRN](#).
- **Google Scholar:** A freely accessible web search engine that indexes the full text or metadata of scholarly literature across various disciplines. [Google Scholar](#).
- **CORE (COncnecting REpositories):** Aggregates open-access research papers from repositories and journals worldwide. [CORE](#)
- **SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online):** A collection of open-access journals from Latin America, Spain, Portugal, and South Africa. [SciELO](#)
- **Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB):** Provides open access to academic peer-reviewed books. [DOAB](#)

Important Points to Note

1. Researchers are often busy and may take time to respond to queries, especially if they need to consult with their organizations. It's important to give them sufficient time in such cases.
2. Some journalists find it challenging to locate experts. When writing for global publications, consider building a network of experts from around the world.
3. Building relationships with experts is crucial; accurate reporting helps in this regard. If unsure about a detail, verify with the expert by asking, "If I understand correctly, would this be accurate?" This ensures you provide an accurate perspective and reduces the risk of misreporting.
4. When an article is published, remember to share it with the researchers. Researchers love it when they are quoted positively, as it enhances their academic reputation.
5. Ensure you properly credit any material used in your article to maintain credibility and avoid potential plagiarism issues. Some experts may incorporate others' work into their replies. It is advisable to cross-check all written responses to a plagiarism checker to ensure the content is original.
6. It is advisable to develop a database of experts for your story. One way to do this is by identifying institutions you want to collaborate with and writing an introductory letter to them. Additionally, some institutions have a portal in the contacts section of their website where they list all their experts along with their profiles. You can simply search for the type of expert you need. Moreover, academia is a small field where experts tend to know one another. Once you have built rapport with one, they can often refer you to relevant specialists in other areas if they are not specialized in the field, you are inquiring about.
7. Some studies receive sponsorship, such as a health study funded by a pharmaceutical company. Sponsorship doesn't necessarily bias the results, and some findings may be valuable and worth reporting. However, it's essential to disclose any conflicts of interest in your story to maintain transparency.
8. Avoid relying solely on press releases for science reporting. These releases are crafted by PR professionals who may exaggerate to grab attention. While they provide a starting point, it's crucial to read and understand the actual study before reporting. Instead of using quotes from press releases, consider conducting your own interviews with the lead researcher for fresh, accurate quotes.



Conclusion

In journalism, mastering the art of reporting journal articles is a continuous learning and growth journey. My experience, starting with minimal knowledge in 2012, demonstrates that anyone can develop expertise through persistent effort and guidance. As you spend more time reading, writing, and working with your editor, each step forward brings you closer to becoming a seasoned professional in this vital field of journalism.





About the Author

Hi there! I'm Hezron Ochiel, an avid storyteller and a global peak coach with a talent for blending strategic communications, best practices, and life skills into actionable strategies that drive extraordinary success. For over 15 years, I have thrived in guiding startups, large corporations, and individuals in growing their brands.

I began my career as a journalist, gaining experience in creative and technical writing.

My extensive experience in brand storytelling then led me to Corporate Communications and Public Relations industry, where I have been a catalyst for change.

As an experienced writer and commentator, I have appeared in many global publications, including [Reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com), [TheNewHumanitarian.org](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org), [TheGuardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com), and [Standardmedia.co.ke](https://www.standardmedia.co.ke).

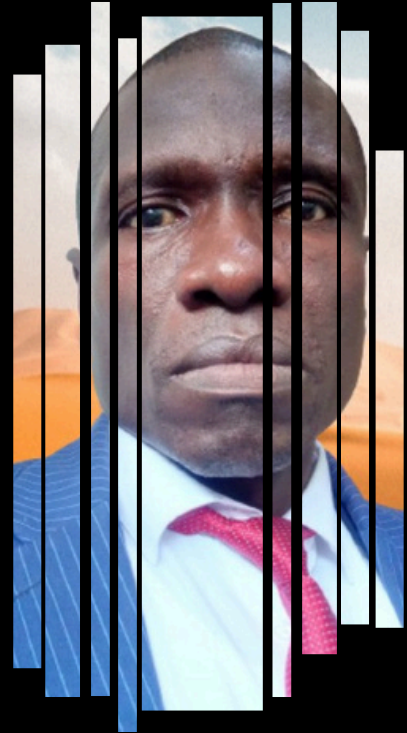
One of my proudest achievements is leading a media advocacy campaign with Amref.org that culminated in the recognition of Community Health Workers (CHWs), now called Community Health Promoters, within Kenya's formal health workforce.

Additionally, I have elevated health journalism in Africa by pioneering the Health Communication and Journalism program at [Amref.ac.ke](https://www.amref.ac.ke) and establishing the Africa Media Network on Health to spearhead media advocacy across the continent.

I have contributed to more than 50% growth of global brands such as Amref.org, HIV-Free Generation, Ichooselife.global, Goodcheckup.com, and KMTC.ac.ke through impactful PR and social media campaigns.

In 2023, as part of my Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, I launched 'Hezron's Weekly Insights' and 'Hezron Insights' to provide resources and tools for startups, large corporations, and individuals seeking to grow their brands.

My best-selling book, "Strategic Insights: A Practical Guide for Excelling in Public Relations," highlights my commitment to sharing expertise and driving success.



info@hezroninsights.com



www.hezroninsights.com

Hezron Ochiel