

Journal Club Handbook



www.eiderafricaltd.org

Journal Club Handbook

April 2020

© Eider Africa Limited. Please do not copy content without permission.

Foreword



Dear Researchers

Welcome to the Journal Club everyone.

It is a pleasure to be part of a great community of African Scholars. The aim of our research mentorship program at Eider Africa is to draw together communities of researchers and professionals who nurture, motivate and celebrate each other. For a long time, our experiences in Africa have been told through a specific world view dominated by particular voices. This has led to the selective understanding of our realities, the proliferation of short-term solutions to long term complex problems and the invisibility of our intellectual contributions.

By coming together, we reposition ourselves differently. We break down hierarchies in our professions and academia which keep us part and segment us into unproductive silos. We support each other to grow into high quality scholars who lead, conceptualize, coordinate and implement contextually relevant participatory research projects. Through spaces like the journal clubs, we create opportunities for policy makers to recognize our needs as scholars in Africa and guide them on how to create environments that enable us to produce and use knowledge imaginatively. Our work complements the efforts of other actors who are in the research ecosystem, in particular institutions of higher learning.

We aim to provide research mentorship programs that are paced, transformational, collaborative, foster holistic growth of the researcher and are pegged on lifelong learning. I have personally gained a wealth of knowledge and skills from the Journal Club.

This short handbook is meant to give you a better idea of what the Journal Club is about, why it is an important space for researchers and how you can benefit from it.

Aurelia Munene

Founder Eider Africa, Researcher, Research Mentor, Afro-Optimist and Rotarian

Contact: +254 708363571

Email- aurelia.eiderafricaltd.org

Acknowledgements

I want to thank every single member of the journal club for all your contribution so far. We thank all those who have been participating in the club since it started in the year 2017. Thank you for sharing your resources, time, ideas and food. We specially thank Michael Wangai for supporting us with a physical venue for two years free of charge. We appreciate Joyce Wangari for bringing in many members and being readily available to respond to members' needs. We appreciate all the many mentors from the club and outside who have held sessions with us.

Our team

Journal Club Lead Mentor – Aurelia Munene
Journal Club Lead Mentor-Joyce Wangari
Programme Coordinator – Raymond Munene
Knowledge Management – David Nene

Contents

Journal Club	6
Common Journal Club norms	7
Group Mentorship with an External Mentor	8
Peer Mentorship Sessions	8
Study Smart Program	10
Specific Discipline Thematic Group.....	11
Peer Reviewing a text	12
Mock Thesis Presentation	13
Accountability Buddy	13
Uliza Swali	14
Networking and Sharing Opportunities	14
Shut up and Write	15
How to use Zoom	16

Journal Club

What is our Journal club about?

Our journal club is a research mentorship and collaborative space created by Eider Africa to bring together researchers to grow their research skills, nurture critical appraisal, enhance subject matter expertise, foster networks and collaborations. For more information, please visit www.eiderafricatd.com and our social media handles.

Who are the members of the club?

Members include emerging, mid-career and seasoned researchers who may double up as students, lecturers, consultants and practitioners in their respectful fields. We are multidisciplinary and are drawn from over 11 universities both private and public in Kenya and beyond. Our current membership stands at 256 and growing.

What do you need to become a member?

You become a member by joining either of the two online groups that are facilitated on WhatsApp. You can register your details [Journal Club Registration](#)

What activities take place in the journal club?

1. Group Research Mentorship from an external mentor
2. Peer Mentorship sessions where members of the club offer mentorship
3. Study Smart Program – Mental Health and Wellness program for Researchers
4. Specific Discipline Thematic Groups
5. Peer Reviewing a Text
6. Mock Thesis Presentation
7. Accountability Buddy
8. Uliza Swali
9. Networking and Sharing Opportunities
10. Shut up and Write

Common Journal Club norms

1. Keep all the communication online and offline respectful, non-discriminatory and non-judgmental.
2. We are an all-inclusive group and any member is free to ask any research question without intimidation.
3. WhatsApp messages can be very overwhelming therefore we encourage members to post only what is relevant to research.
4. We encourage members to share job, funding, training events and research opportunities. Members send any such opportunities to our Programme Coordinator- Raymond +254 719 186 889 and he will post the opportunities every Thursday afternoon.
5. Members are encouraged to save any document they would like on their computer or cloud as back up.
6. Journal Club members do not write papers or any content for participants. We adhere to research and academic integrity.
7. Participation for all club activities is at no cost to the journal club member except for some courses which are long term and involve an external mentor committing long time like Statistical Packages, Qualitative Analysis tools like NVIVO and Foundational Research Courses.
8. Participation is voluntary and members can leave the club at any time with no consequence. If members want to remain in the club but not on the WhatsApp group, they can be part of the emailing group.
9. We sometimes take photos in our face to face activities. We may use them on social media pages to create visibility of the club. Let me know if you do not want us to post any of your pictures by [emailing - eiderafricaltd@gmail.com](mailto:emailing-eiderafricaltd@gmail.com).
10. We encourage active participation from members, the spirit of sharing knowledge and reciprocity.

Group Mentorship with an External Mentor

The primary role of the journal club is to sharpen the research skills of the members through the support of an external mentor or a peer mentor. We periodically invite mentors to conduct research sessions in the club. We prefer mentors who are actively working on research projects and those with accumulated relevant experience through practice. Mentors are drawn from universities in Kenya and abroad. We prioritize diversity of experiences so that members can have a rich exposure. Power point presentations and recordings are shared after the session and on our [YouTube](#). You can subscribe.

How does it work?

We hold face to face group sessions at the American Spaces in Nairobi CBD Moi University Bazaar Building either the first or last Friday of the month. We make the announcement of the mentor who will be facilitating the session way in advance. We prefer attendees to pre-register through a google form and share their expectations for the session before hand. Power point presentations and recordings are shared after the session on our [Journal Club Google Drive](#).

Peer Mentorship Sessions

This is a platform we have created in the journal club to enable members share research-related topics with other members. We believe that members have ideas and expertise they can share with other members. Most times we use zoom platform for presentation. We prefer attendees to pre-register through a Google form and share their expectations for the session before hand. Power point presentations and recordings are shared after the session and on our [YouTube](#). We encourage mentors to share the links on their LinkedIn pages so that they can create visibility for their own work.

Peer Mentorship Sessions

Who is a peer mentor?

This is a researcher of any level and does not have to be an expert. They just need to be willing to try, learn and share. It is also a process of building confidence and growing into thought leadership in a particular area.

How does it work?

Any member who wants to present a topic will just inform the Program Coordinator -Raymond. They need to do this be a week before the date of presentation. They can apply [Peer Mentor Registration](#)

The peer mentor can choose to present more than one session.

How does a peer mentor benefit?

1. Join a pool of mentors
2. Sharpen their understanding on their topic and create visibility for their work.
3. Enhanced skills in role-modelling, mentoring, practice personal leadership skills and listening skills.

What topics can a peer mentors present on?

1. Academic Writing
2. Academic Reading
3. Research Proposal
4. Research Ethics
5. Mixed Methodology
6. Quantitative Data Analysis
7. Qualitative Data Analysis
8. Qualitative Research Design
9. Quantitative Research Design
10. Scholarly Publication
11. Developing Grant Proposal
12. Artificial Intelligence
13. Effective Networking Skills
14. Self- Branding and Communication Skills
15. Developing a Blog/Vlog
16. Presentation skills
17. Research Communication
18. Applying for Scholarships and funding opportunities.
19. Research Dissemination
20. Successful Research Careers

And any other topic they find relevant.

What support does a peer mentor get from Eider Africa?

1. They get to raise their portfolio with visibility around their work since the zoom sessions invite more people from our social media platforms. Also, all the presentations are placed on You Tube if the presenter wants.
2. We provide an online Google drive link of the session recording.
3. We support the mentor by peer reviewing
4. We will provide a zoom platform or physical space (American Spaces) and a scheduled reminder.
5. We peer review the mentor's' presentation to give tips and feedback so that their presentation stands out.
6. If a mentor needs a recommendation and a certificate, they could request for one.

Study Smart Program

Study Smart© Season One runs from July 2019 to June 2020 and effectively provides mental health support for researchers' skills and habits. The motto is "One Year of Growth and Wellness".

To participate, you can:-

1. Attend monthly online Zoom trainings with the follow-up WhatsApp group discussion to get support to improve your study skills along with study habits
2. Attend and actively participate in the monthly live group therapy every 3rd week of the Month.
3. Utilize the opportunity for 1-on-1 counseling and other mental health services at your own Cost.

Study Smart is a Mental Health and Wellness program for Researchers. It was initiated by Joyce Wangari, one of the Journal Club Lead Research Mentors.

The Study Smart Program is an interventional program led by Psychologists and other mental health practitioners to enhance researchers' practice of holistic growth and wellness in the research journey. It is designed to increase self-awareness and efficacy in research productivity. The top reason people decide to join the Study Smart © program is that they had a friend or colleague participate in the program and were amazed at their increased productivity. This is because there is a demonstrated gap in improving habits, dealing with pressure and being self-directed in the research journey.

As we are in this time of the year and you begin thinking about what type of changes you want to make for this or next year, here are a few success stories for inspiration. These are some of the benefits participants expressed in the July 2019 training and group therapy sessions: -

1. *"It has been a wonderful adventure of self-discovery and learning."*
2. *"It has helped me prioritize my writing and supported me to submit a solo-authored paper that I'd been sitting on for years."*
3. *"The Shut Up & Write sessions, the weekly chats on our WhatsApp group, the group therapy and online Zoom trainings all together were a blended learning approach, which connected me with wonderful colleagues while also availing me individual attention. I could see value in every tool that the mentorship offered."*

Specific Discipline Thematic Group

The journal club has also created the opportunity for members in the same discipline to form WhatsApp thematic groups where they can be discussing issues related to their specific field. We have over 10 different disciplines in the club.

For example:

- 1) Mental Health and Psychology
- 2) Gender & Sexual and Reproductive Health
- 3) Public Health
- 4) Development Studies
- 5) Human Resources
- 6) Media & Communications
- 7) Education
- 8) Policies
- 10) Development Finance & Economics
- 11) Child Protection
- 12) Statistics/Data Science/Demography
- 13) Law
- 14) Animal Physiology

How does it work?

Members of specific disciplines inform our Program Coordinator about the wish to create a new discipline or join an existing specific thematic group.

The Program Coordinator will register your name and direct you to the WhatsApp page if it has been formed.

We encourage members from the club to volunteer and start a specific thematic group and facilitate. Aurelia the Journal Club coordinator will support from the background.

Members are free to structure the activities they want to carry out in the group while keeping to norms of the journal club.

Peer Reviewing a text

Peer Review of a text is an important scholarly activity which improves a scholar's critical questioning ability and writing.

How does it work?

Members can select in the main journal club or in their thematic clubs a paper to review. They may even ask a member of the club to peer review their paper for them or part of their paper. It is better to ask for review for part of a paper than a whole paper (just to be careful)

The review will be guided by some of these questions if relevant. Review questions will be posted on a Google form like this for example: <https://forms.gle/d3ziRohoyw25wFY87>

A review criterion includes and is not limited to:

1. What claim(s) is/are being made?
2. How is it supported?
3. What is the quality of the evidence? (Validity of Methods and analysis)
4. What has been left out and is this significant? Why?
5. What are the strengths of this text? What are the weaknesses? What (if any) assumptions does the author make?
6. Examine the conclusion carefully and ask: is this the correct conclusion from the points made in the argument? Do I agree or disagree with these?
7. How can you use this work to improve your practice?

(The review criterion was developed by Dr. Auma Okwany).

Once the members review a paper(if it is a group) they will have two volunteers consolidate the discussions, then set a day to discuss with everyone who reviewed what they found, areas of agreement, synergy etc. Benefits of convening peer review sessions are to get practice being a research leader, conference moderator and subject expert.

Mock Thesis Presentation

What are Mock Thesis Presentations?

This is a peer review platform created for journal club members who would like to rehearse their thesis presentation with other journal club members for comments and feedback. The benefit is mutual to the one receiving comment and to the one giving comments.

How does it work?

The journal club member who wants feedback from the members will inform the program coordinator Raymond or the club coordinators Aurelia and Joyce two weeks in advance.

The member will prepare a power point presentation and make a presentation via zoom for 15 minutes and receive feedback from the members.

Two discussants will volunteer to give the main feedback to the presenter. They need to see the PowerPoint presentation at least a week before to prepare comments.

The feedback is meant to help the presenter think through some of the areas that are not clear to the audience. However, they have the choice to take whatever feedback they want to keep and whatever they want to leave out.

Accountability Buddy

What are accountability buddies?

This is an activity created in the journal club to help journal club members encourage and motivate each other to complete the research related tasks that they have set out to undertake. We know procrastination is often experienced by many researchers. One way to address it is to have someone who hold you to account.

How does one get an accountability buddy?

Each Journal club member is welcome to self-select someone from the club to hold them accountable in their research journey. Once they select someone, they will become each other's buddies. After three months, they will get new buddies. Old buddies are encouraged to share their successes and constrains.

What is the role of an accountability buddy?

An accountability buddy is meant to find out the long- and short-term goals of their buddies. Then, every two weeks check on how their buddy is progressing with meeting their goals and motivate them.

Uliza Swali

Uliza Swali is Swahili for “Ask a Question”. This is an activity of the journal club where members are encouraged to ask each other questions. Members are encouraged to ask questions in the group, or they can share questions with the Programme Coordinator anonymously by Wednesday MIDDAY.

Then on Friday a group of mentors and journal club members will answer the questions through a zoom meeting or on the WhatsApp page. Questions are a great way to learn. If a member is feeling stuck you call the mentors or anyone you feel can support you in the club.

Networking and Sharing Opportunities

We encourage members in the group to share funding opportunities, trainings, employment, reading material, research opportunities and any other relevant resources. We encourage journal club members to share their publications so that members can know what they are doing and reference them.

How does it work?

Every week members of the club are encouraged to send any of these opportunities to our Programme coordinator Raymond 0719 186 889. Every Thursday afternoon he will post all the consolidated opportunities in a word document in the journal club and to every member. This prevents a lot of traffic on the WhatsApp group.

Shut up and Write

What is the Shut Up and Write Session About?

When we started the journal club, we realized many people were attending mentorship sessions, but they were not dedicating time to write their various research projects. So, we adapted a well-known methodology called Shut up and Write.

This is a writing session where journal club members dedicate 2 hours to write their various research projects. They literally Shut up (keep quiet) and Write. Members may be writing their thesis, a conference paper, a publication, a report etc.

We have given members an opportunity to meet physically and do their own writing. This happens twice a month - on the first and last Friday of the month (8am- 10 am) at the American Spaces. If you cannot make it, you can do it at home. This is to give journal club members a chance to write in a quiet place and then attend the mentorship session of the day from 11 am – 1 pm.

Studies have shown if you dedicate at least two hours every day you will make progress in your writing.

How does it work?

It works best if two or more members can team up together and choose a specific writing time once a week or once a day. For example, they can select: Every Saturday morning 9 – 11 am. If you cannot find someone to team up with, members are welcome to individually schedule their Shut up And Write sessions.

Members have reported benefiting immensely from these activities.

After the writing session, members can debrief with each other about the session and what they can do better.

How to use Zoom

Zoom is an easy-to-follow platform for unifying cloud video conferencing, simple online meetings and group messaging. It is a web-based video conferencing tool with a local, desktop client and a mobile app that allows users to meet online, with or without video. Zoom users can choose to record sessions, collaborate on projects, and share or annotate on one another's screens, all with one easy-to-use platform. For more information, see https://sitelicense.ucr.edu/files/zoom_for_instructors.pdf

How to attend a zoom session?

1. You need a stable internet connection, adequate lighting, a quiet desk, Smartphone with WhatsApp, or/and your computer, which is connected to power or adequately charged. Have a pair of earphones handy.
2. Download the Zoom app on your Smartphone, but most preferably onto your computer/ laptop. Go to Google Play Store, search Zoom and install. (You may need to uninstall other more temporary apps in case your device's memory space is limited; you can always reinstall them later)
3. Ensure your volume is turned on in your computer/phone. Use earphones if it helps you focus the sound. The host/facilitator will allow members to join by sending them the Zoom ID or/and password code to type.
4. Enter the Zoom ID as prompted on the Zoom home page; when you join, you may introduce yourself. The host/facilitator may use screen-share so you can view slides, as well as use video or/and audio of themselves.
5. The Zoom group call is unlimited. Therefore, the facilitator can make a one hour to one hour and half -minute presentation then invite discussions for 15 minutes of Question and Answer (Q & A), which our very able facilitator will moderate.
6. On the bottom tool bar, you can mute or allow (unmute) your output of video, audio or chat to contribute.
7. While exercising the privilege to schedule and run the meeting, the host will mute any participants if they're in a noisy place.
8. The Zoom recording will be uploaded on the Google Drive link by David Nene, who can be reached via +254725086023. (The zoom write up was developed by Joyce Wangari).

“There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give African Scholars. One of these is roots; the other, wings” Anonymous