

ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

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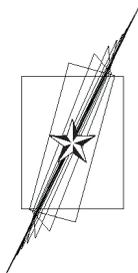
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From the Editor

Citations, Ranking, and the Challenging Yet Promising Role of Universities and Social Sciences Journals and Authors

We reported in *APSSR*'s new section, *Data At a Glance* (September 2018), that Asia-Pacific is home to 220 universities (more than two-thirds are in China, Japan, Australia, South Korea, and India) considered part of the world's top 1,000 universities. The Times Higher Education and Quacquarelli Symonds set the university ranking each year. One criterion used is citations per faculty: the number of times the articles of a faculty published in vetted peer-reviewed journals are cited in other articles. Overall, citations are indicative of scientific rigor, productivity, credibility, and status, thus having more citations per faculty means higher status and ranking for both the individual and the university. As such, many universities across the region have been guiding and incentivizing their faculty members to publish in Scopus-abstracted journals and submitting their faculty journals for abstracting consideration in Scopus. To these universities, Scopus—the world's largest database that offers 10%–15% more citations—constitutes one of their pathways to greater visibility and discoverability—and higher ranking.

The vertical movement of the region's universities has only been weakly attributed to citations per faculty in the social sciences. The list of the top 20 Scopus-abstracted journals per country in the region shows that journals in the social sciences, including some in allied disciplines, are not the main sources of citations. The social sciences journals are a numerical minority in the pool of top-tiered Scopus journals dominated by publications in the natural, life, engineering and computing sciences. Among the top 20 journals listed in Scopus, Thailand has one social sciences journal, Australia has three, the Philippines has one (and a few from allied fields), but China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea have none. The number of social sciences journals in the pool is likely to grow in some years to come, however, given that several universities in the region have also been submitting their journal publications to Scopus for evaluation. These universities, as well as others, are also producing new journal titles in the social sciences, which are likewise pre-ordained for Scopus consideration. These movements are a welcome development in the region, where the need for the social sciences is expected to intensify further as the demand for non-material resources brought about by the dizzying structural challenges of the times increases even more.

Universities are likely to achieve greater visibility and discoverability for their social sciences journals if they design these publications according to globally-acceptable publishing norms. Scopus has very clear publishing guidelines. For example, at the minimum, Scopus expects a journal to:

- Publish peer-reviewed content,
- Publish on a regular basis, with an ISSN confirmed by the ISSN International Centre,
- Have an abstract, article title, keywords, and references in the English language, and
- Have a publication ethics and a publication malpractice statement.

At the next and final level, Scopus evaluates a journal in terms of:

- Policy,
- Content,
- Standing,
- Regularity, and
- Online availability.

According to Scopus, a journal must have a convincing editorial policy (and if I may add, a simple, realistic, and achievable policy); must be diverse in terms of the geographical distribution of its editors and authors; and must have a peer review process (i.e., carried out by the main editor, or one that is open, single-blind, double-blind, and online). Moreover, Scopus indicates that a journal's content must have a distinct academic contribution to the discipline, which must be clearly reflected in the abstracts and the readability of articles, and most importantly, in conformity with the journal's stated aims and scope. Scopus likewise puts a premium on the standing of a journal—that the articles published in the journal have been cited or could be potentially cited by Scopus-abstracted journals. Furthermore, Scopus expects the journal editor to have a good status in his or her discipline and the wider community and that he or she has an actual or potential contribution to strengthening the future of the publication. A journal must also be published and released regularly and promptly and must have a quality online journal homepage in English.

Experience suggests that publishing, and more importantly, sustaining a quality journal rests upon three interplaying primary factors, namely, the university, the editor, and the authors. The top university administration must provide unequivocal support to the journal, especially in terms of funding. Funding has to be flexible and progressive, because of the ever-changing demands and costs associated with publishing norms (e.g., online availability is now a requirement). Universities seeking to put up and sustain an international and a quality journal should refrain from making an issue out of funding, as doing so would dampen the publishing processes and outputs and the morale and long-term engagement of the editor. In addition, the university must appoint an editor who will serve as the journal's key designer and caretaker. Scopus demands that the editor must be respected in the discipline, must have a good publishing track record based on his or her h-index in Scopus, and must be hardworking and deeply committed to steering the journal to greater heights—for the long haul and even for a lifetime. Simply put, the editor is key to a journal's quality life.

Moreover, the university—in tandem with the editor—must publicize the journal to a critical mass of authors, both domestically and internationally, to sustain the flow of article submissions. Having a homepage and a social media page would do wonders to the journal's visibility and discoverability. The *APSSR*, a Scopus-abstracted journal since 2009, promotes its contents via its website <http://apssr.com> and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/DLSUAPSSR/>. Each month, it receives a good number of submissions from far and wide—US, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Spain, Iran, Hungary, India, South Korea, Singapore, Mexico, Vietnam, and Taiwan—and certainly from its home country, the Philippines. The continued flow of submissions suggests that it does pay to publicize. Some of these submissions are featured in this edition, and as always, the topics are a vital research resource for the social sciences.

Authors are very critical actors. Essentially, authors are expected to produce professional outputs, but other than reporting their key findings and implications in a clear, organized, and convincing fashion, authors can do so much more in promoting their publications to broader networks of researchers in the region. They can use seminars, conferences, the Internet, websites, social media, blogs, email communications, meetings and personal conversations, and many more, to communicate a piece or two about their published research. The more frequent the communication and promotion, the better it would be for the visibility, discoverability, and citations of the published research, authors, and institutions. Fortunately, there are more authors in the region now than before who

are cognizant of the immense personal and professional benefits to be derived from sharing research knowledge, which certainly bodes well for the citation metrics of the social sciences.

Much is known about citations per faculty as a parameter for global ranking; also, much is known about the parameters of quality journal publication. An increasing number of universities have begun mobilizing their human and material resources, including those in the social sciences, to meet—or even surpass—these parameters for global ranking. The requirements for vertical institutional and faculty mobility have been set and established, and all that is needed is for universities to sustain and further elevate their responses to higher levels (and to never look back, if I may say so). Some decades from now, it would not be a surprise if the region sees more of its universities ranked as the world’s best—and at the heart of that scenario, there lies the broadened contribution of the social sciences.

We produced four editions of the *APSSR* in 2018 and we will do the same in 2019, which is the 10th year of the journal’s inclusion in Scopus.

Please always visit our website (<http://apssr.com>)
and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/DLSUAPSSR/>).

...and it is Christmas time once again. The best of the holidays!

Romeo B. Lee
Editor-in-Chief
romeo.lee@dlsu.edu.ph