

# ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

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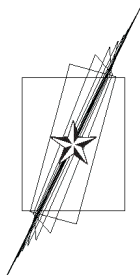
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# From the Editor

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## **Publish or Perish and its Implications to Academia**

The term publish or perish, which first appeared in an academic context in 1928, refers to the pressure exerted on faculty members to publish research in scholarly journals to survive and thrive in the academe. Faculty members are expected to meet publication targets in academic journals as a requirement for graduation, hiring, tenure, and promotion. This phenomenon, which began in research universities, has spread across higher education institutions all over the world. This is partially due to expectations and pressure on colleges and universities to do well in national and global rankings, which put a premium on publication and research reputation as major performance indicators.

The pressure to publish has resulted in an exponential rise in academic publications worldwide. Precise numbers are hard to get, and estimates vary, but past data and the estimated annual growth rate of 4% to 7% put the current number of academic journals somewhere between 35,000 to 40,000. This translates to an output of between 2.0 to 2.5 million manuscripts published annually as of 2022. On whether this is a good or a bad thing, however, opinions are, at best mixed. On the one hand, the increased emphasis and resources for research have allowed many colleges and universities to strengthen their research programs and faculty members to take their duties to engage in and participate in research more seriously. Publish or perish, however, also has unintended and detrimental consequences to academia that need to be considered.

The pressure on faculty members, and increasingly graduate students, to meet publication targets contribute to the rise and proliferation of pay-to-publish predatory publishers and journals. Seeing an opportunity from the strong demand for publication outlets and the desperation of those needing to meet quotas and deadlines, these outlets offer to quickly publish articles for a fee. However, most of these have nonexistent, lax, or questionable peer-review and editorial processes and often churn out low-quality studies of questionable value. This contributes to the rise of junk science, which undermines public confidence in the value of scientific research and science. Unfortunately, attempts to identify predatory journals, such as that initiated by library scientist Jeffrey Beall, have been hampered by lawsuits and strong pressure from publishing companies that stand to lose out from such interventions in a very lucrative industry. This has a chilling effect on many critics and opponents of predatory publishing.

The increasing demand for publication outlets also contributes to the rapidly ballooning number of new academic journals, many of which fail to meet or maintain high academic standards or sustain operations over the long term. Many organizations and universities are establishing their journals to boost their reputation and provide a publication platform for their community. Many, however, soon realize that in a world with tens of thousands of well-established journals and thousands of new ones being born each year, the competition for high-quality contributions and reviewers is tough, and meeting the high requirements and standards for accreditation and international indexing can be daunting. As a result, many are unable to continue operating for long. Others no longer strive to be accredited or indexed and settle for being a platform for publishing the work of their constituencies that fail to pass elsewhere.

The emphasis on quantity and speed of publication can also undermine the quality of scholarship, as some academics resort to gaming the system. They shift their priorities toward quick-to-produce and immediately publishable research studies rather than engage in in-depth, high-quality research requiring careful and systematic data collection and analysis that takes more time to produce. This results in the proliferation of mediocre publications with marginal value, impact, or utility and the waste of valuable scientific expertise and resources. This can also incentivize unethical practices such as tampering with data and cutting corners for quick results. In the last few years, several investigations have uncovered several peer-review and citation rings engaged in unethical practices meant to boost the publications and citations of their members.

The rapid growth in the number of journals and submissions and the demand for increasingly shorter turnaround times also negatively impacts the quality of life of many academics. Editors find themselves devoting increasingly more time to screen an ever-growing number of submissions, dealing with increasing backlogs, and engaging in fierce competition with editors to attract quality contributions and recruit more reviewers from a limited pool of (willing) academics. The latter, in turn, also have to deal with increasing numbers of refereeing requests and short deadlines, even as they grapple with the need to produce and publish their own research while performing other important duties such as teaching and extension work.

The increase in academic publications has not necessarily translated into significant advancements in science or knowledge. Previous studies suggest that most journal publications will have negligible or very low levels of readership; many will remain unread, much less cited or used. Predatory practices, quality control issues, and emphasis on quantity over quality translate into many published articles being of low quality and lacking scientific value.

If left unchecked, the publish or perish norm in academia can also drastically shift priorities toward research at the expense of other vital functions of higher education, specifically teaching and community engagement. Many colleges and universities are not only realigning more resources and incentives toward research but are also restructuring policies in a way that assigns to publications the single biggest weight in hiring, tenure, and promotion criteria. This incentivizes faculty members to prioritize research and publications, sometimes to the detriment of teaching and community engagement.

In recent years, publication requirements are increasingly becoming more challenging. The required number of publications and the rank or prestige of journals where one has to be published are rising, especially in colleges and universities concerned with national and global rankings. Nowadays, it is also not enough to be published; one must also be cited. This ups the ante and puts even more pressure on academics, especially against the backdrop of competition for a shrinking number of tenured faculty positions in many colleges and universities. This aggravates an already precarious situation in academia.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, various studies have already pointed out that between two-fifths to two-thirds of academics were already distressed with work-life balance, job insecurity, and mental health issues, including isolation, anxiety, depression, and burnout. Studies have noted that the incidence of mental health issues among Ph.D. students, many of whom are aiming for a career in academia, is already significantly higher and can be as much as six times higher than that of the general population. The Covid-19 pandemic is expected to exacerbate mental health issues in the next few years as the prolonged experiences of isolation, economic difficulties, suffering, and losses catch up and take their toll on many survivors. This will impact not only faculty members but also students and other members of academia.

The issues I raised here are well known, but the lack of a strong and coordinated response from many higher education institutions and administrators leaves many academics to fend for themselves. There are no strong indications that publish or perish will disappear anytime soon. Many administrators and academics have come to accept the practice as part of the profession despite the issues and problems that come with it.

There is no disputing that research is the backbone of science and is an important duty. There is a need, however, for the academic community to reevaluate how this mantra contributes to and detracts from the goals of



higher education, science, and our collective pursuit of knowledge. What good does publish or perish accomplish if the resulting increase in journal publications does not significantly contribute to significant advancements in knowledge and science, if the tremendous pressure to meet publication quotas contributes to poor scholarship, and incentivizes unethical practices, if the inordinate prioritization of research comes at the expense of important duties such as teaching and community engagement, and if it aggravates issues with work-life balance, mental health, and well-being of the members of the academia? Is there a way to structure policies and systems to address the need for research and avoid the pitfalls of this norm? We must collectively ask and address these questions in the academe, even as we fulfill our duties to engage in research and contribute to producing new knowledge.

This journal issue covers a broad range of topics and a diverse range of research methods from authors from different disciplines and countries in the Asia-Pacific. In Indonesia, Ronny H. Walean and colleagues propose and test a structural model to uncover the factors of brand gestalt that influence brand attitude and revisit intention in the context of tourism destinations. Nandang Sutrisno, on the other hand, examines the tensions and resulting clash between international and domestic norms in Indonesia's Halal Act resulting from globalization on the one hand and the desire to maintain a national identity on the other. Chee-Seng Tan and colleagues studied Malaysian parents' perspectives on creativity and sought to understand how they assisted their children in developing creativity. Sakol Sopitarchasak examines how the meaning of being a drag queen is constructed in Thailand from different narratives.

In the Philippines, Maria Cristina Bordallo examines how the experiences of climate change-related phenomena and risk perception influence household energy conservation and behavior. Anthony Lawrence Borja reverse engineers the concept of political illiberalism as a political value system and examines how it manifests among Filipinos using data from the Asia Barometer Survey. Ngo Thi Anh Van dissects legal and psychosocial factors and explains why Vietnam has not become a transnational surrogacy center despite sharing many similarities with some neighboring countries considered hubs for this practice.

Mark Vincent Nogra reviews the growing literature on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Civil Society Organizations (ASEAN-CSO) relations, its general trends, and gaps. Yusop Boonsuk and colleagues, on the other hand, examine stereotypes and preferences in the hiring of English Teachers as reflected in the advertisements of English Language Teaching companies in Thailand and China. Junhua Peng and collaborators, on the other hand, conducted a sociolinguistic appraisal of Chinese-English bilingual puns in Guangzhou, an international metropolis in China, to better understand the sociolinguistic dynamics in Chinese communities.

On behalf of the editors of the APSSR, we would like to thank our contributors for sharing their invaluable research work. We also thank our reviewers for taking the time to referee these contributions and provide comments and suggestions to improve these manuscripts. Finally, we would like to thank all our readers for their continued support of our journal throughout the years.

**Ador Revelar Torneo**  
Editor-in-Chief

