

Comparing the Status of Publishing Scientific Journals in State Universities and Islamic Azad University Units

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Abstract: *This descriptive-survey study aims to identify the problems of publishing scientific journals in state universities and Islamic Azad Universities. Statistical population includes all academic journals the data of which is registered in www.Magiran.com. Required information were collected using a questionnaire. Results of this research indicate that the problems of publishing scientific journals in both state universities and Islamic Azad Universities are not significantly different and barriers of regular publication of these journals include factors and variables such as arbitration-related issues, shortage of scientific manpower, lack of correspondence between arbitrators' remuneration and their efforts, and other issues affecting the undesirability of status quo of publishing scientific journal.*

Keywords: *Comparison, publication, scientific journals, state universities, Islamic Azad University.*

Introduction

The increase of both state and Islamic Azad Universities is one of the achievements of developing higher education in Iran having paved the way for further production and exchange of scientific information in addition to the increased expansion of higher education in the country. Diverse higher education centers in the country and competition for proving the scientific position among other academic centers within and outside the country have paved the way to pay attention to science and publish it in the form of a variety of information sources including academic journals having a long history of data transfer. Today, the role of scientific journals in transferring information and their significance in announcing especially in universities and higher education institutions are undeniable. These types of journals referred to by researchers and scholars in their researches and studies play an important role in the exchange of information; therefore, it is important to publish them in universities and higher education centers and all universities and higher education centers try to contribute in the publication of scientific journals. Wan Raan (2003) believes that scientific journals play an important role in the exchange of science and knowledge. In other words, many of these journals are published in the international arena and discuss scientific findings as an academic center. High-quality researches lead to encouragement and motivation of other researchers to conduct research activities (Wan Raan, A.F.J, 2003).

Problem Statement

Although publishing the scientific journals plays an important role in qualitative development of an academic institution and subsequently publication of scientific productions in national and international level, it is necessary to pay attention to problems with publishing these types of journals. Delay in publication, lack of interest of the scientific community, inattention to the quality of articles, publication stoppage, inaccuracy in articles arbitration, unsuitable distribution problems are some problems approved by the results of few studies conducted. Solomon (2008) believed that in the past, the scientific journals were usually managed by scientific associations and their contents included the results of original studies conducted by researchers and scholars. Although it was expensive to publish these journals, these costs were provided by scientists due to the journals' worthiness (Solomon, 2008).

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Investigating the status of publishing scientific journals in the country to identify existing barriers and problems, not only the improvement of these journals becomes easier but also the journals' managers find opportunity to pave the way for improving their academic position among other national and international journals by complete knowledge of and acquaintance with shortcomings and inadequacies.

Research Methodology and Statistical Population

This is a descriptive-survey research in which the required data were collected using the questionnaire. Statistical population of research includes those scientific journals of state universities and Islamic Azad University to the address of which related questionnaires were sent after identifying them using www.Magiran.com. Data collected from questionnaires were analyzed using statistical package of SPSS after being coded.

Major questions of research:

1. Which factors affect the publication delay of scientific journals in state universities and Islamic Azad Universities?
2. What are the most important issues related to the arbitration of the articles of scientific journals in state universities and Islamic Azad Universities?
3. What is the role of financial problems in continuity or discontinuity of scientific journals in state universities and Islamic Azad Universities?
4. How much are arbitrators satisfied with their remunerations?
5. What are the most important criteria for articles arbitration?
6. Which criteria receive the most attention in terms of quality when receiving articles?
7. Which criteria are emphasized to improve the ranking of scientific journals?

Background

A study conducted on 80 scientific journals in 1991 indicates that the most important issues stated by managers are as follows in order of importance: Lack of basic facilities to publish publications (with a ratio of 42/1%), lack of access to foreign expert resources (21/8%), lack of financial and moral support of related organizations from scientific and professional publications and the existence of bureaucracy (12/5%), lack of an editorial board and writer and managing director having several jobs (10/9%), poor management and improper implementation of the role of scientific and professional publications (9/3%) and finally problems with distributing publications (3/1%) (Mohseni, 2002, 46). Investigating the status of scientific journals of *librarianship*, Soltani (1998) refers to barriers and problems with publishing scientific journals in Iran including the skyrocketing cost of production and providing article, lack of adequate support from the government especially in private sector, high cost of production and lack of governmental support, problems with collecting and editing contents, planning and managing the journal due to the shortage of manpower expert in publishing the journal, journal's owners having several jobs, unfaithfulness of journal's counterpart including author or translator to submit articles and unfaithfulness of printing offices to meet obligations timely, lack of access to new and updated contents by journal's experts, consecutive interpretation of public journals' managers, part-time journal's experts, deviation from the subject domain and expertise due to the improper management or popularity of the journal, poor budget and asset and lack of a suitable distribution system (Soltani, 1998, 65).

Mousavizadeh (2001) in his study on the status of scientific journals in Iran concluded that these types of journals are not in a suitable condition in terms of number, topical coverage, language, timely publication, copies, English abstract and international sign of periodicals (Mousavizadeh, 2001, 8). Results of a study conducted by Mohseni on inter-organizational and outer-organizational issues of scientific journals in Iran indicate that inter-organizational issues are more important than outer-organizational issues for publishing scientific journals and the most important issues have economic, technical, political and legal sources. Economic problems are more stated by the managers of private sector journals and the problem of readers is about the quality of scientific journals, while managers pay attention to the equipment aspect (Mohseni, 2002, 41). In 1991, "Investigation of factors affecting the publication of scientific publications in Iran" was the subject of a master's thesis (Dr. Bagher Sarookhani as supervisor and Mr. Ali Asghar Kia as researcher). In this thesis, the researcher tested 10 different hypotheses on the publication or non-publication of scientific journals (provided by the direct investigation of viewpoints of 80 managers) and concluded that the affordability of scientific publications' concessioner, publication's circulation, correspondence of the concessioner's field of study and his acquaintance with the publication trend are not associated with the publication or non-publication of the journal, but access to facilities, rate of obtaining new scientific information, ability to distribute publications, profits from sales, amount of support from scientific associations and public institutions, backtrack of political compromises and finally, lack of

scientific manpower and editorial board are associated with the publication or non-publication of the journal (Mohseni, 2000, 27). The results of a study conducted by Rahimi Movaghar (2003) on bibliometry of *Scientific Mental Health Journals of Iran* indicate that the *Scientific Mental Health Journals of Iran* enjoy the relative number and variety (Rahimi Movaghar, 2003, 28). In his study, Sheibani Nia (2010) examined the time interval of the research and publication of articles in Dental Scientific-Research Journals of Iran. Results of this study show that there is a delay in 39.5% of the articles and the least interval of issuing the certificate till publishing is 19.4%. Delay in issuing the certificate till publishing the articles is another important result of this study. 20 percents of these articles were faced with this deficiency.

Pashaeizad (2011) in his study titled "Investigation of the status of publishing scientific journals in Iran" found that over 530 scientific journals most of which affiliated to universities and public research institutes are published in Iran. In terms of the availability status, the study results showed that only 40 percents of journals provide free access to full text of their articles through their website and journals of medical science are in a relatively better position than journals of other areas (Pashaeizad, 2011, 155)

Research Findings

Table (1): Topical trends of journals

Expert Group	Humanities		Basic Science		Technical and Engineering		Art and Architecture		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
State universities	23	7.27	40	48.2	14	16.9	6	7.2	83	100
Islamic Azad University	27	27.3	36	36.4	31	31.3	5	5.1	99	100

According to statistics and figures of Table 1, among a total of 182 investigated journals, 83 cases (45/6%) belong to state universities 23, 40, 14 and 6 cases of which are related to the fields of humanities, basic sciences, technical and engineering, and art and architecture, respectively. Accordingly, among a total of 99 journals investigated by Islamic Universities units, 27, 36, 31 and 5 cases belong to the fields of humanities, basic sciences, technical and engineering, and art and architecture, respectively.

Table (2): Factors affecting the publication delay of journals

Dependence on		Budget	Arbitration	Peripheral activity of the publication in the administrative system	Shortage of article	Shortage of manpower
State university	Average	2.08	3.58	2.11	2.24	3.45
	Number	83	83	83	83	83
	Standard deviation	1.16	1.449	1.179	1.195	1.364
Islamic Azad University	Average	1.97	3.74	2.01	2.48	3.6
	Number	99	99	99	99	99
	Standard deviation	1.102	1.404	1.208	1.257	1.203

Answer of the first research question: Which factors affect the publication delay of scientific journals in state universities and Islamic Azad Universities?

According to Table 2, the managers of scientific journals of Islamic Azad University believe that budget with an average of 1/97 and shortage of manpower with an average of 1/67 have the least effect on publication delay of scientific journals of this university, while peripheral activity of the publication in the administrative system with

an average of 2/01, shortage of article with an average of 2/48 and organizational barriers with an average of 2/90 have little effect on publication delay of journals and arbitration issues with an average of 3/74 and shortage of manpower with an average of 3/60 have the greatest effect. Comparison of these factors on the publication delay of scientific journals in state universities shows that lack of interest of manpower with an average of 1/72 – such as what was observed with regard to Islamic Azad University – has the least effect on publication delay of scientific journals in state universities and budget with an average of 2/08, peripheral activity of the publication in the administrative system with an average 2/11, shortage of article with an average of 2/24, and organizational barriers with an average of 2/73 have little effect on publication delay of scientific journals. The rates of peripheral activity of the publication in the administrative system, shortage of article, and organizational barriers are not slightly different in state universities and Islamic Azad Universities. On the other hand, in state universities like Islamic Azad University, arbitration with an average of 3/58 and shortage of manpower with an average of 3/45 have the greatest effect on publication delay of scientific journals.

Table (3): Issues related to articles arbitration

Dependence on		Arbitrators' precision	Arbitrators' cooperation	Submitting the evaluated articles at the scheduled time	Reasoning to reject the article	Possible bias of arbitrators in selection
State university	Average	1.66	2	2.04	1.57	2.04
	Number	83	83	83	83	83
	Standard deviation	0.928	0.883	0.723	0.814	0.573
Islamic Azad University	Average	1.68	2.15	2.08	1.67	2.04
	Number	99	99	99	99	99
	Standard deviation	0.913	0.896	0.65	0.857	0.638

Answer of the second research question: What are the most important issues related to the arbitration of the articles of scientific journals in state universities and Islamic Azad Universities?

According to Table 3, the rate of arbitrators' precision with an average of 1/68, reasoning by arbitrators to reject articles with an average of 1/67, arbitrators' proficiency to evaluate and select the article with an average of 1/19 and quick access to arbitrators with an average of 1/77 have been approved in scientific journals of Islamic Azad University but submitting the evaluated articles at the time scheduled by arbitrators with an average of 2/08, arbitrators' cooperation with the journal's office with an average of 2/15 and possible bias of arbitrators in selecting articles with an average 2/04 have not been approved. Accordingly, the rate of arbitrators' precision with an average of 1/66, reasoning by arbitrators to reject articles with an average of 1/57, arbitrators' proficiency to evaluate and select articles with an average of 1/28 and quick access to arbitrators with an average of 1/81 have been approved in state universities. Both of these universities have the same situation in terms of above-mentioned factors. On the other hand, arbitrators' cooperation with the journal's office with an average of 2/00, submitting the evaluated articles at the time scheduled by arbitrators with an average of 2/04 and possible bias of arbitrators in selecting the article have not been approved in state universities. As can be seen, these two cases are relatively the same in both state universities and Islamic Azad University.

Table (4): Journal's financial problems

Dependence on		Allocation of sufficient funds for journal's publication	The effect of encouraging policies of the university on journal's activity	Journal's ability to achieve autonomy	Prevention of the journal's publication due to financial problems
State university	Average	1.51	1.66	1.93	2
	Number	83	83	83	83
	Standard deviation	0.817	0.845	0.659	0.716
Islamic Azad University	Average	1.37	1.6	2.07	2
	Number	99	99	99	99
	Standard deviation	0.708	0.844	0.593	0.833

Answer of the third research question: How do financial problems affect the activity of scientific journals in state universities and Islamic Azad Universities?

According to Table 4, considering the scientific journals of Islamic Azad Universities, allocation of sufficient funds for journal's publication with an average of 1/37 and the effect of encouraging policies of the university on journal's activity with an average of 1/60 are approved by respondents, but the journal's ability to achieve autonomy with an average of 2/07 and prevention of the journal's publication due to financial problems are not approved by respondents. On the other hand, the status of response to all issues related to financial problems except the journal's ability to achieve autonomy is not significantly different in state universities and Islamic Azad University and indicates the allocation of sufficient funds for journal's publication with an average 1/51 and the effect of encouraging policies of the university on journal's activity with an average of 1/66, while managers of scientific journals of state universities believe that the ability to achieve autonomy with an average of 1/93 has been approved.

Table (5): Arbitrators' remuneration

Dependence on		Arbitrators' satisfaction with arbitration remuneration	Correspondence of arbitrators' remuneration and their efforts
State university	Average	2.08	2
	Number	83	83
	Standard deviation	0.736	0.796
Islamic Azad University	Average	2.19	2.62
	Number	99	99
	Standard deviation	0.772	0.678

Answer of the fourth research question: How much are arbitrators satisfied with their remunerations?

According to Table 5, respondents with an average of 2/19 believe that arbitrators are not satisfied with their remuneration in Islamic Azad University and those with an average of 2/6 believe that there is no correspondence between their remuneration and their efforts. On the other hand, there is the same situation in state universities since respondents with an average of 2/08 approve the dissatisfaction of arbitrators with their remuneration and those with an average of 2/00 believe that the paid remunerations are not enough for their efforts.

Table (6): Criteria to receive articles

Dependence on		The effect of degree	The effect of the author's scientific position	Journal-related topic or content
State university	Average	1.65	1.8	1.04
	Number	83	83	83
	Standard deviation	0.903	0.880	0.244
Islamic Azad University	Average	1.72	1.67	1.08
	Number	99	99	99
	Standard deviation	0.881	0.821	.034

Answer of the fifth research question: What are the most important criteria for articles arbitration?

According to figures of Table 6, answering the questions on the criteria to receive articles by scientific journals of Islamic Azad University, respondents with an average of 1/72, 1/67 and 1/08 have considered the author's degree, the author's scientific position and journal-related topic or content important in the acceptance of articles, respectively. Scientific journals of state universities are in the same position as Islamic Azad University in terms of articles' acceptance criteria, so that responders with an average of 1/65, 1/80 and 1/04 have considered the author's degree, the author's scientific position and topical relevance of the article important in its acceptance, respectively.

Table (7): Quality of received articles

Dependence on		Observance of scientific principles	Observance of writing principles	Scientific contents	High volume of articles
State university	Average	3.94	3.59	4.43	2.45
	Number	83	83	83	83
	Standard deviation	1.141	1.2	1.073	1.085
Islamic Azad University	Average	4.15	3.84	4.64	2.53
	Number	99	99	99	99
	Standard deviation	0.93	1.167	0.749	1.137

Answer of the sixth research question: Which criteria receive the most attention in terms of quality when receiving articles?

According to Table 7, respondents believe that the observance of writing principles with an average of 4/15 and scientific contents with an average of 4/64 are important criteria in evaluating the quality of received articles in the scientific journals of Islamic Azad Universities and the observance of writing principles with an average of 3/84 play a far less important role in this qualitative evaluation, but high volume of articles with an average of 2/53 has little effect on the qualitative evaluation of received articles. Viewpoints of respondents in state universities regarding the evaluation criteria of received articles are not significantly different, so that scientific contents with an average of 4/43, observance of scientific principles with an average 3/94 and observance of writing principles with an average of 3/59 highly affect the qualitative evaluation of received articles and high volume of articles with an average of 2/45 is not significantly effective.

Table (8): Conditions of journals' improvement

Dependence on		The effect of concessioner editorial board	The effect of circulation on journal's improvement	The effect of qualitative articles on journal's improvement	The effect of reliance on journal's articles	The effect of publication quality on journal's improvement
State university	Average	1.88	2.19	1.83	1.31	1.64
	Number	83	83	83	83	83
	Standard deviation	0.817	0.772	0.922	0.714	0.849
Islamic Azad University	Average	1.94	2.15	1.72	1.54	1.95
	Number	99	99	99	99	99
	Standard deviation	0.867	0.734	0.902	0.849	0.999

Answer of the seventh research question: Which criteria are emphasized to improve the ranking of scientific journals?

According to Table 8, the managers of scientific journals of Islamic Azad University believe that the concessioner editorial board with an average of 1/94, qualitative articles with an average of 1/72, reliance on journal's articles with an average of 1/54 and publication quality with an average of 1/95 have affected the improvement of journals, but the journal's circulation with an average of 2/15 has not been effective. On the other hand, viewpoints of the managers of scientific journals of state universities are significantly similar to those of the managers of scientific journals of Islamic Azad University, i.e. they also believed that the concessioner editorial board with an average of 1/88, qualitative articles with an average of 1/83, reliance on journal's articles with an average of 1/31 and publication quality with an average of 1/64 have affected the improvement of journals, but the journal's circulation with an average of 2/19 has not been effective.

Discussion and Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the publication of scientific journals in all countries of the world especially in universities and higher education institutions has a special importance and place. Increased scientific productivity,

interest of scientists and researchers in the publication of their scientific works in form of article and the necessity of informing other researchers and scholars of the results of such research require the publication of scientific journals to enjoy a special order. Results of studies conducted in Iran indicate that there are some barriers and problems with orderly and timely publication of scientific journals in the country from which scientific journals of universities and academic centers are not exempt. Shortage of basic facilities of publication, lack of financial and moral support from parent organizations, paperwork and administrative bureaucracy, shortage of scientific manpower, members of the journal's editorial board having several jobs, delayed publication and etc are some problems the effects of which on the unorganized status of publishing scientific journals are more or less approved by the results of conducted studies.

Findings of this study show that the arbitration-related issues and shortage of scientific manpower are considered in both state universities and Islamic Azad University as the most important factors affecting the publication delay of scientific journals and lack of timely submission of evaluated articles lack of suitable cooperation of arbitrators are issues stated in arbitration. However, the managers of journals believe that arbitrators are not satisfied with their remunerations and paid remunerations are not enough for researchers' efforts. Other findings of this study indicate that the journal's managers have approved the degrees of articles' providers, authors' scientific positions and topical relevance as basic criteria of receiving the article. On the other hand, considering the quality of received articles, the observance of scientific principles, the observance of writing principles and scientific contents have been highly important.

In addition, the result of this study suggests that the managers of scientific journals have considered the journal's circulation ineffective in improving its rank, but believe that the concessioner editorial board, quality of articles, reliance on the journal's articles and publication quality affect the improvement of the journal's rank.

Comparing the status of publishing scientific journals in state universities and Islamic Azad University, it should be noted that according to the findings of this study, there is no significant difference between the factors affecting the status of publishing journals in these universities and generally, problems of scientific journals are significantly common in both state universities and Islamic Azad University and a slight difference in some of the answers cannot be a conclusive reason of conditions governing the publication of these types of journals in above-mentioned universities.

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