Journal of Scientometric Research, 2024; 13(1):230-238.
https://www.jscires.org

Research Article

Relationship between Insider Research and Time from Submission to Acceptance in Turkish Dentistry Journals

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ABSTRACT

Journals, regardless of their quality, may facilitate the publication of studies of affiliated authors or those of researchers in their close networks, this exhibiting biased behaviors in favor of insider researchers during peer review. The aim of this research was to determine insider authors' motivations for obtaining high and fast rates of acceptance of studies published by their affiliated institutions. A total of 11 Turkish dentistry journals with regular publishing schedules between 2017 and 2021 were examined. The publication language of the papers was either English or Turkish, and the papers were of four groups: original articles, reviews, case reports and short communications. The submission date, acceptance date, and time from submission to acceptance of each paper were examined. The number of authors and the corresponding authors' countries of origin were noted, and the papers were analyzed to determine whether the researchers were insiders. The findings show that insider authors both publish in large numbers in their affiliated universities' journals (15.6% - 65.0%) and have significantly faster speeds (up to 82 days). The average time from submission to acceptance significantly differed for insider and outsider researchers in all journals except four. As in most areas of the health sciences, dentistry also lacks research on bias and the literature contains no study examining this issue in the field of dentistry both in Turkey and in the world. This study invokes a new discussion in this area by focusing on national dentistry journals and the bias inherent in editorial attitudes. In the future studies, it would be better to compare data on insiders and outsiders by incorporating both national and international dentistry papers in the future studies.

Keywords: Scientometrics, Bibliometrics, Data analysis, Academic Inbreeding, Insider bias, Turkish dentistry journals.

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Received: 28-09-2023;
Revised: 17-12-2023;
Accepted: 29-01-2024.

INTRODUCTION

Publishing an article is not an easy task[1] and the publishing process is often a source of frustration among researchers intending to share their studies.[2-4] Academic publishing should support high-quality studies, regardless of the author's background.[5] However, journals may exhibit in-group bias in terms of the time taken from submission to acceptance, which is attributed to individuals' affiliation with the institution, ideological tendencies, gender, or nationality or the novelty of the idea.[6-8] Ideological disagreements with authors, personal rivalries, and weak research findings may also be reasons for such a bias.[8-12]

In the literature, there are some definitions that may be closely related to malpractice concerning publishing an article in a scientific journal, such as nepotism, academic inbreeding and editorial gatekeeping. Nepotism is a common hiring mechanism in (family) firms: families use their control to hire family members, thus perpetuating family involvement over time and across generations.[13,14] Academic inbreeding involves the appointment of faculty members who graduated from the same institution employing them, and it is often referred in negative terms because of its association with unproductive academic conduct.[15-19] Finally, the most notable malpractice is that of in-group bias or favoritism displayed by journals or editors toward insider researchers because of their positions. In-group bias is defined as having a positive attitude toward researchers affiliated with the university that publishes the journal of interest.[10,20]

Journal's attitudes play a significant role in the acceptance of submitted studies because the editor is the final decision maker in referee selection for the evaluation of submitted work.[21] Existing studies have reported that journals may exhibit biased attitudes in favor of researchers in their professional networks and even provide compensation to protect their own quality and

OPEN ACCESS

DOI: 10.5530/jscires.13.1.19

Publishing Partner : EManuscript Tech. [www.emanuscript.in]

prestige.[10] A study supporting this claim revealed journals' bias in favor of the researchers affiliated with them.[22]

In Turkey, most public universities, faculties, and social science institutes publish their own journals. While having their own publications may be considered an indication of institutions' soft power by academic circles, it can also provide potential career benefits, such as the ability to meet expected performance criteria for associated staff and the prompt publication of papers.[23] A Social Science Research Network study that compared two universities and two independent journals showed that the authors of studies published in the universities' journals were mostly academics working at those universities.[5]

Peer review is an institution of enormous importance for the careers of scientists and the content of published science.[1] Academic journals use peer reviews to obtain objective assessments of the scientific validity of submitted studies. However, biased behaviors that may impair the impartiality of the review process.[24] Journals, regardless of their quality, may facilitate the publication of studies of affiliated authors or those of researchers in their close networks, this exhibiting biased behaviors in favor of insider researchers during peer review.[20] The decisions of gatekeepers—that is, the journal's editors and peer reviewers—legitimize the scientific findings of published studies, facilitate the distribution of professional reward[s] and influence future research. While some researchers have argued that the publishing of high-quality studies is due to interjournal competition,[23,25] others have stated that it is a way for editors to publish substandard, low-quality papers submitted by their close friends and colleagues.[10]

The Regulation on Academic Incentive Allowance (AIA) was put into force in Turkey on December 18, 2015, and was revised on December 31, 2016, as a means for supporting scientific studies and encouraging faculty members to be productive. Within the scope of the AIA Regulation prepared in accordance with the Higher Education Law, a maximum of 10 points can be obtained in areas such as project research, publication, design, exhibition, patent, citation, conference talks and awards for academic advancement. Starting the year 2016, financial support has been also provided to academic staff at different levels and at the rates indicated in the regulation.

The aim of the AIA was to encourage Turkish national scientific studies, support those who do scientific work, and increase the quantity and quality of scientific national studies and national journals in Turkey. However, the regulation rewards caused a significant increase only in the quantity, and not the quality, of Turkish national journals and publications.[26] Further, they led to the proliferation of Turkish national journals with less stringent acceptance criteria and poor peer review processes.[27]

The regulation provides different criteria for social and health sciences (medicine, dentistry etc.,). For dentistry academia in Turkey, the regulation requires academics to collect at least eight points from nationally published dental journals and a minimum of 100 points to apply for academic advancement. However, none of the Turkish dentistry journals are in the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), the Science Citation Index (SCI), or the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI). Therefore, studies that are accepted by Turkish dentistry journals obtain less points than those accepted by international journals. Thus, when considering the scoring system of the regulation, Turkish academicians in the field of dentistry tend to have more publications by choosing the easier route instead of obtaining quality publications.[23]

In general, the health sciences explore the physiological processes of humans to find treatments to pathological issues. The natural fundamentals in this field often lack observations of human behavioral attitudes. Bias, which has not been adequately studied in health sciences, may lead to complications in the critical areas such as health science academia. As in most areas of the health sciences, dentistry also lacks research on bias. The literature contains no study examining this issue, which has a crucial aspect, in the field of dentistry both in Turkey and in the world. Thus, the present study investigated the bias and potential favoritism exhibited by Turkish dentistry journals in favor of insider researchers, which could result in shorter durations from submission to acceptance, compared to attitudes toward nonaffiliated researchers. Although the focus was on the determinant factors of being an insider researcher and the in-group bias reflected by the time from submission to acceptance, this study also invokes a new discussion in this area by focusing on national dentistry journals and the bias inherent in editorial attitudes.

The study hypothesizes that insider publications are associated with shorter time-to-acceptance.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 11 Turkish dentistry journals with regular publishing schedules between 2017 and 2021 were examined, namely 7Tepe Klinik, Acta Odontologica Turcica, the Journal of Dental Faculty of Atatürk University, the Journal of Ege University School of Dentistry, European Annals of Dental Sciences, European Oral Research, Selçuk Dental Journal, Cumhuriyet Dental Journal, Clinical Dentistry and Research, the Journal of International Dental Science, and Aydın Dental Journal. The number of papers published annually and the index categories of the journals were examined. Journals that published regularly in the last 10 years and that successfully realized the publication periods specified and planned on their sites were included the study. Journals of medical science were excluded. Journal issues containing supplementary (additional) content and congress or symposium abstracts were excluded from the study. The publication language of the papers was either English or Turkish, and the papers were of four groups: original articles, reviews, case reports, and short

communications. The submission date, acceptance date, and time from submission to acceptance of each paper were examined. The number of authors and the corresponding authors' countries of origin were noted, and the papers were analyzed to determine whether the researchers were insiders. Insider researchers were those affiliated with the university that owned the corresponding journal through employment or study. In the study design; if an author from university A published a paper at dentistry journal of university A, we noted the author A as an insider researcher as well as paper. All of the papers viewed in the study are clearly stated on the official sites of the journals where they published and are also available for everyone.

Few Turkish journals provide information about their review processes. Therefore, study data reflect only accepted papers. Although statistics obtained from these data shed light on the issue in question, examining the data, reviews rounds, such as the total number of submissions to the journals and initial decision time, may help make clear inferences about in-group bias.

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 26 software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 26 Inc, IL, USA). In the data evaluation stage, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of the data. The Mann–Whitney test was performed to determine the significance of differences of variables. A multivariable linear regression model was u to determine the effects of the predictor factors (independe variables: journal title, type of papers, the existence of insider manuscript's language, the number of insider author and ournal age) on the time to acceptance (dependent vari le). No ality was assessed for time to acceptance and non-nor lly d data were transformed using the natura og (Ln) lue where relevant. The statistics were based on observation and six predictors. A p-value < 0.05 was considere ignificant for the analysis.

The model consisted of ne de ndent variable: time to acceptance. This represente he me from the submission of a paper to its acceptance where declared. The full model equations with independent variables were as follows:

TIME TO ACCEPTANCE = Constant + Insider (Yes) + Language of Paper (English) + Journal Title (ADJ) + Journal Title (AOT) + Journal Title (AUDFD) + Journal Title (CDJ) + Journal Title (CDR) + Journal Title (EADS) + Journal Title (EOR) + Journal Title (EUDFD) + Journal Title (SDJ) + Journal Title (JIDS) + Type of Paper (CR) + Journal Age + Number of Insiders

RESULTS

The papers published in the journa are sh n in Tables 1, 2, 3, Figures 1 and 2 distributed b ear, languag of publication, and type. A total of 1919 p ers w e examin based on the previously specified crite a. The majo y of published papers were original articles, some ere short mmunications. The statistical relations ps b en the n mber of insider papers and time from s mission to cept ce for the studies of insider and outside rese hers are gi in Table 4. Upon examining the papers of the sele d journals over the last five years, EADS was f nd to have the hi est insider researcher rate at 65%, and the verage time from submission to acceptance (14.99 days) was mu shorter tha those of other journals. SDJ had the lowest rate of ins er researc ers (15.6%); however, the time from submission to accepta statistically significantly differed for insider and ou researchers and was in favor of insider researchers ($p <$ .01). Similarly, 7Tepe's rate of insider researchers (18.9%) was low, but the mean time from submission to acceptance of insider researchers' studies was also statistically significantly low ($p <$ 0.01). In contrast, the rates of insider researchers were high for ADJ and AOT (46.6% and 46.1%, respectively), but the difference between insider and outsider researchers' time from submission to acceptance was statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). For CDR, the insider researcher rate (45.7%) and mean time from submission to acceptance (202.49) were higher than those of other journals, and the relationship between insider and outsider researchers'

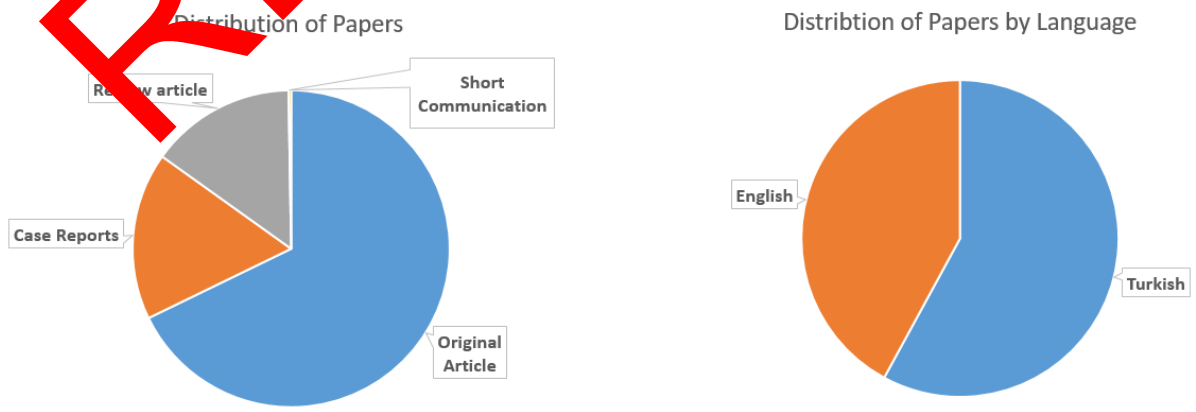

Figure 1: Distribution of papers and language.

mean times from submission to acceptance was also statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). When the publications of the 11 journals over the last five years were examined, the difference between insider and outsider researchers' mean times from submission to acceptance was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for all journals except four (ADJ, JIDS, AUDHFD, and AOT). The study also showed that 57.6% of all papers were written in Turkish, and only 42.4% were in English.

The linear multivariable regression model results are shown in Table 5, indicating that time to acceptance was significantly affected by the existence of insiders ($p < 0.001$), journal title ($p < 0.001$) and journal age ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, the other independent variables in this study (the language of manuscript, type of paper and the number of insider authors) did not show any significant effects on the dependent (time to acceptance) variable ($p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

According to the literature, an insider is a person who owns a journal through their employment or education and/or is currently affiliated with the corresponding university.[10,20] It is very likely that these individuals use their relationships with the journal or journal editor to gain access. Since the extent of involvement of insider researchers and the type of argu[illegible] used in the reviewed journals could not be exactly determ[illegible]ed, a limited definition of insider researcher was[illegible]d in t[illegible] study. Conversely, there may be outsider researchers who have connections with related journals. The extent to which journals are affiliated with outsider researchers is estimated to be low, but it is quite difficult to measure.

Mrowinski *et al.*[1] stated that the submissions of insider researchers are accepted relatively faster than those of outsider researchers. Karadag *et al.*[28] researched ability of Turkish scholars to publish in Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). Ross *et al.*[29] also observed that most journals tend to publish papers by insider researchers faster than those by outsider researchers. Apart from a few journals, mos[illegible]ly exhibit significant in-group bias and fail to treat o[illegible]sider autho[illegible] equally. Lutmar & Reingewertz [30] showed that a[illegible]demics sub[illegible]it less influential papers to the journal [illegible] the uni[illegible]rsity w[illegible]h which they are affiliated. This attitud[illegible] may be due to [illegible] belief that they will be treated favorably [illegible]thin [illegible]eir jurisdiction, their reluctance to leave their com[illegible]rt zone[illegible] the relat[illegible]e encouragement of national publication[illegible] regulations. Xu *et al.*[31] researched the difference of the pu[illegible]licatio[illegible] by board and non-board members from the perspectives of pub[illegible]tion delay and influence. The study showed th[illegible]t the scientific pub[illegible]cations by board members have shorter [illegible]blication d[illegible]ays than those by non-board members. Similarly, i[illegible] the present [illegible]udy, the proportion of insider researchers varied be[illegible]en 15 [illegible]% and 65.0% among the examined journals, and the difference in the time from submission to acceptance was up to [illegible], favoring insider researchers. Further, insider researchers choose to publish their papers in the journal of the university

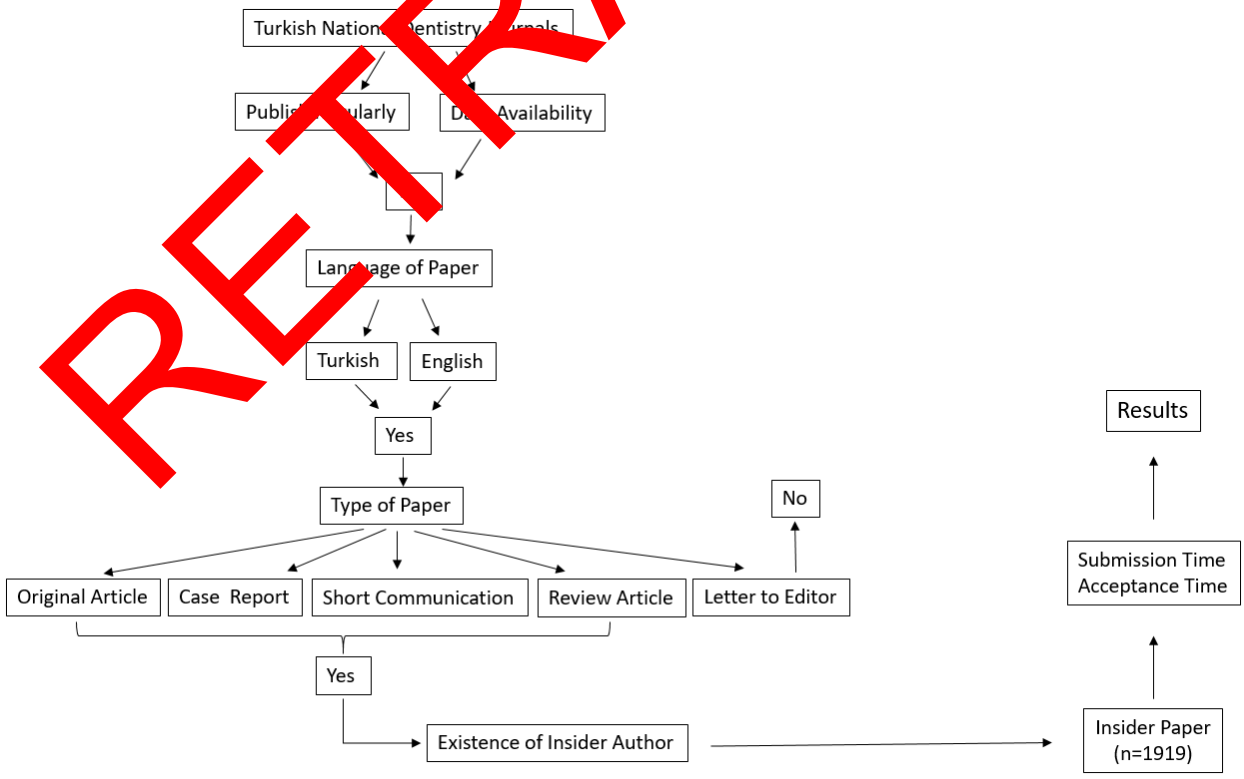

Figure 2: Research Process.

with which they are affiliated, even though there are many other national dental journals that may fit the scope of their work. Considering that writing and publishing high-quality research takes time and effort, SCIE, SCI, SSCI publications score higher in the regulatory reward system, but the reward-to-effort ratio is significantly in favor of national dental publications. In this regard, Muller *et al.*[32] stated that the system encourages low-quality publications for increased timeliness of performance evaluations instead of urging researchers to produce high-quality publications.

The findings of this study confirm the existence of in-group bias and academic favoritism among most dentistry journals. However, it should be taken into account that this biased attitude may be simple nepotism with no psychological or other basis. Considering the increase in the number of researchers who have submitted their studies for publication in recent years, it

Table 1: Distribution of papers published by journals by years.

	Year					
Journal Title	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
ADJ	16	12	10	16	19	73
JIDS	9	30	15	17		80
CDR	18	15	25	14		92
CDJ	29	51	63	47	49	239
SDJ	27	36	55	75	133	326
EOR	30	30	24	24	24	132
EADS	24	25	24	26	24	123
EUDHFD	24	25	24	29	28	130
AUDFD	28	97	103	94	98	420
7TEPE	31	55	6		38	227
AOT	21	15	13	15	12	76
Total	257	391	419	397	454	1919

7 TEPE; 7Tepe Klinik, AOT; Acta Odontologica Turcica, AUDFD; Journal of Dental Faculty of Atatürk University, EUDHFD; Journal of Ege University School of Dentistry, EADS; European Annals of Dental Sciences, EOR; European Oral Research, SDJ; Selçuk Dental Journal, CDJ; Cumhuriyet Dental Journal, CDR; Clinical Dentistry and Research, JIDS; Journal of International Dental Science, and ADJ; Aydın Dental Journal.

Table 2: Distribution of papers by language.

	Language		
Journal Title	Turkish	English	Total
ADJ	46	27	73
JIDS	59	21	80
CDR		92	92
CDJ	13	226	239
SDJ	248	79	327
EOR	0	132	132
EADS	99	24	123
EUDHFD	99	31	130
AUDFD	313	107	420
7TEPE	175	52	227
AOT	54	22	76
Total	1106	813	1919

7 TEPE; 7Tepe Klinik, AOT; Acta Odontologica Turcica, AUDFD; Journal of Dental Faculty of Atatürk University, EUDHFD; Journal of Ege University School of Dentistry, EADS; European Annals of Dental Sciences, EOR; European Oral Research, SDJ; Selçuk Dental Journal, CDJ; Cumhuriyet Dental Journal, CDR; Clinical Dentistry and Research, U JIDS; Journal of International Dental Science, and ADJ; Aydın Dental Journal.

is possible that editors turn to the researchers they know and believe are reliable to reduce this workload.

Academics in Turkey have to gain 100 points to apply for academic advancement (associate professor) and re-collect 100 points in five years for full professorship. Some of these points (at least eight points for health sciences/dentistry) are required to be achieved by publishing papers in Turkish dentistry journals, in line with the criteria provided by the interuniversity council (UAK). However, none of the Turkish dentistry journals are in the SSCI, SCI or SCIE category, due to which studies that are accepted by these journals obtain less points than those accepted by international journals. Since it is difficult to publish in international journals and studies must be of particularly high quality, Turkish researchers may try to get their work accepted by Turkish dentistry journals for a large part of their academic scores.

Due to the academic incentive regulation that came into force in 2016, the number of journals with low acceptance criteria and inefficient evaluation processes has increased.[27] This regulation may have led academics to seek ways to increase their academic productivity and quickly publish as many papers as possible. Insider researchers aim to publish frequently by applying to

Table 3: Distribution of paper types published in journals.

Journal Title	Original article	Case report	Review article	Short communication	Total
ADJ	7	38	28	0	73
JIDS	21	36	23	0	80
CDR	81	11	0	0	92
CDJ	184	37	18	0	239
SDJ	233	50	44	0	327
EOR	115	15	2	0	132
EADS	63	35	25	0	123
EUDHFD	89	5	35	1	130
AUDFD	283	64	73	0	420
7TEPE	161	30	36	0	227
AOT	64	7	[illegible]	4	76
Total	1301	328	[illegible]85	5	1919

7 TEPE; 7Tepe Klinik, AOT; Acta Odontologica Turcica, AUDFD; Journal of Dental Faculty of Atatürk University, EUDHFD; Journal of Ege University School of Dentistry, EADS; European Annals of Dental Sciences, EOR; European Oral Research, SDJ; Selçuk Dental Journal, CDJ; Cumhuriyet Dental Journal, CDR; Clinical Dentistry and Research, JIDS; Journal of International Dental Science, and ADJ; Aydın Dental Journal.

Table [illegible] Comparison of acceptance time and Insider papers ratio.

Journal Title	All papers (201[illegible]2021)	Insider Papers	Insider Papers Ratio (%)	Median Acceptance Time (Min -Max)	Median Insider Time (Min -Max)	Median Outsider Time (Min -Max)	*P**
ADJ	73	[illegible]	46.6	41.0 (0-232)	19.00 (0-183)	43.00 (0-232)	0.447
JIDS	80	29	36.3	56.50 (0-338)	49.00 (0-240)	58.00 (3-338)	0.912
CDR	[illegible]2	42	45.7	174.0 (17-588)	135.00 (17-588)	214.50 (61-585)	0.004
CDJ	[illegible]9	39	16.3	73.0 (1-638)	41.00 (3-315)	78.50 (1-538)	< 0.001
SDJ	327	51	15.6	119 (1-611)	62.00 (5-414)	125.00 (1-611)	< 0.001
EOR	132	25	18.9	101.0 (12-452)	75.00 (12-318)	117.00 (13-452)	0.011
EADS	123	80	65.0	0 (0-210)	0.00 (0-105)	0.00 (0-217)	0.001
EUDHFD	130	49	37.7	129.0 (0-983)	101.00 (0-983)	140.00 (0-618)	0.001
AUDHFD	420	101	24.0	130.50 (5-508)	117.00 (5-407)	133.00 (24-508)	0.399
7TEPE	227	43	18.9	95.0 (2-687)	44.00 (2-332)	109.00 (3-687)	< 0.001
AOT	76	35	46.1	136.5 (48-469)	130.00 (48-346)	137.00 (51-469)	0.584

SD: Standard Deviation, Results of Mann Whitney U test7 TEPE; 7Tepe Klinik, AOT; Acta Odontologica Turcica, AUDFD; Journal of Dental Faculty of Atatürk University, EUDHFD; Journal of Ege University School of Dentistry, EADS; European Annals of Dental Sciences, EOR; European Oral Research, SDJ; Selçuk Dental Journal, CDJ; Cumhuriyet Dental Journal, CDR; Clinical Dentistry and Research, JIDS; Journal of International Dental Science, and ADJ; Aydın Dental Journal.

Table 5: Linear Regression model outcomes.

	β[1] (%95 CI)	SE	β[2]	t	p	Correlation			VIF
						Zero	Partial	Part	
Constant	4.063 (3.883: - 4.243)	0.092		44.258	<0.001				
Insider Yes	-0.319 (-0.405: -0.233)	0.044	-0.162	-7.270	<0.001	-0.150	-0.164	-0.153	1.129
Language of Paper (English)	0.054 (-0.043: - 0.151)	0.049	0.030	1.089	0.276	0.003	0.025	0.023	1.752
Journal Title *									
ADJ	-0.180 (-0.403: - 0.042)	0.114	-0.039	-1.589	0.112	-0.101	-0.036	-0.033	1.390
AOT	0.655 (0.440: - 0.870)	0.110	0.145	5.970	<0.001	0.087	0.136	0.125	1.347
AUDFD	0.377 (0.246: - 0.508)	0.067	0.177	5.630	<0.001	0.122	[illegible]	0.118	2.255
CDJ	-0.257 (-0.418: -0.095)	0.082	-0.096	-3.113	0.002	-0.16[illegible]	-0,071	[illegible].065	2.181
CDR	0.769 (0.559: - 0.979)	0.107	0.187	7.175	<0.001	0.[illegible]41	[illegible].162	0.[illegible]51	1.544
EADS	0.098 (-0.085: - 0.281)	0.093	0.027	1.049	0.294	-0.071	0.0[illegible]	0.022	1.537
EOR	0.199 (0.010: - 0.387)	0.096	0.057	2.070	0.03[illegible]	0.0[illegible]	0.047	0.043	1.740
EUDFD	0.646 (0.471: - 0.822)	0.090	0.185	7.216	[illegible].001	[illegible]130	0.[illegible]63	0.151	1.492
SDJ	0.161 (0.023: - 0.300)	0.071	0.069	2.280	[illegible].023	0.0[illegible]3	0.052	0.048	2.084
JIDS	-0.379 (-0.590: -0.168)	0.107	-0.086	-3.526	<0.[illegible]01	-0.151	-0.081	-0.074	1.358
Type of paper**									
OA	0.020 (-0.084: - 0.124)	0.053	0.01[illegible]	0.379	0.705	0.077	0.009	0.008	1.816
RW	0.087 (-0.045: - 0.220)	0.068	0.03[illegible]	1.291	[illegible].197	-0.001	0.030	0.027	1.704
SC	0.033 (-0.698: - 0.764)	0.373	0.002	0.089	0.929	0.013	0.002	0.002	1.063
Journal Age	0.076 (0.048: - 0.104)	0.01[illegible]	0.[illegible]18	5.360	<0.001	0.142	0.122	0.112	1.095
Number of Insiders	0.030 (0.003: - 0.057)	0.014	0.[illegible]48	2.169	0.647	0.055	0.050	0.046	1.102
F, p	21.731, p<0.001								
R^2, Adj.R^2	0.163.00.155								

*7tepe (reference), ** CR (Case Report) (reference).

specific journals, indicating a negative relationship between insider research and time from submission to acceptance. Further, the new academic incentive reform (Higher Education Regulation, 2016) provides academicians with economic performance allowance in Turkey for their publications being accepted in Turkish dentistry journals, potentially leading to an increase in fast and easy studies and economic income.

As part of a more advanced higher education policy to encourage national research, academic incentive regulations were introduced in December 2016 to make national publications mandatory. The regulations officially recognized that national journals performance scores are lower than those of Web of Science and Scopus. The regulations recognized the higher quality of Web of Science journals by giving them a performance score 2.5 times those of national journals; however, the score was still not large enough in terms of the relative effort and time required to undertake high-quality research.[23] Pyne[33] showed that publishing in low-quality or predatory journals give researchers a career advantage over those opting for high-quality research when the latter has negative reward. Accordingly, researchers have argued that the attitude toward insider research is caused by an instinct to achieve academic promotion goals. It is undeniable that journals and researchers aim to increase their output levels by utilizing their mutual relationship and adapting to new realities in the field.

Although the present study's findings revealed a prominent in-group bias, it is not possible to generalize a negative relationship between the rate of insider researchers and mean time from submission to acceptance because it was found to differ among all Turkish dentistry journals. Since the aim of this study was to present a general overview of national dentistry journals, the statistics of individual journals were not considered.

Ross *et al.*[29] found peer review bias in the open reviews of abstracts favoring researchers from English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and United States. Kurt[34] also observed that authors who have lack knowledge of English prefer not to submit to prestigious journals due to potential rejection. Oppositely, the present study's findings show that the language of manuscript is not associated with acceptance time and did not show a significant advantage. In addition, since detailed data

on the academic titles of the insider researchers could not be obtained in the present study, comprehensive research is needed in the future.

The results revealed a positive relationship between old-generation university journals and time to acceptance ($p < 0.001$). In comparison, new-generation university journals may be less likely to have insider authors, as the networks of new universities and their academics would be less established. Senior academics in old-generation universities would have advised a larger number of graduate students and may have encouraged their students to publish their theses, leading to both the students and the advisors seeking faster publication for their mutual benefit.

In Turkey, academicians working at universities are generally public servants and are often employed by the same institution where they were previously a research assistant or doctoral student.[23] A study confirming this also highlighted a tendency for Turkish universities to favor their own graduates for new positions.[18] One of the reasons for the bias in the present study may be due to academic inbreeding or nepotism, as confirmed by prior studies.[16,18]

Only the time between the submission of insider researchers' papers and their acceptance was considered in this study. Evaluating all submissions, both accepted and rejected, may be a more comprehensive approach. Further, national papers were used in this study to test the predictions made about insiders. A better approach would be to compare data on insiders and outsiders by incorporating both national and international dentistry papers. In addition, this study only included state/private universities. Future research could also include other associated journals to provide a wider perspective. Future studies may also explore the existence of journal bias by analyzing rejected manuscripts and selective rejection. Thus, the possibility of rejection of insider researchers' papers can be investigated. Also, future studies may address editorial bias, academic inbreeding, nepotism or ethnicity-based approaches.

CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on insider researcher favoritism and provides data that may point to discrimination in favor of authors from the close networks of Turkish dentistry journals at universities. Journals should adopt an impartial approach during the peer review process and strive to ensure that all researchers are treated equally. In-group bias can be reduced through new regulations, effective monitoring, and the strict oversight of dental journals. Researchers who publish in affiliated dentistry journals should not be rewarded with scores toward academic incentive and promotion, as these journals provide a significant time advantage to insiders.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Cite this article: Baser B, Alpaydın MT, Buyuk SK. Relationship between Insider Research and Time from Submission to Acceptance in Turkish Dentistry Journals. J Scientometric Res. 2024;13(1):230-8.