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A Qualitative Research on Being an Author, Reviewer and Editor in the Scholarly Publication Process

Bilimsel Yayın Sürecinde Yazar, Hakem ve Editör Olma Üzerine Nitel Bir Araştırma

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the essence a group of health sciences academics' experience in producing scholarly publications.

In this study conducted with the qualitative phenomenological approach, a set of predetermined criteria were used to select the participants for inclusion in the study group. Thus, the criterion-based sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used in this study. A semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used as a data collection tool. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants. Upon observing data saturation, the data collection process was ended. 12 academics were included in this study. After the interview records were transcribed by the researchers, they were all transferred to the MAXQDA 2022 program, through which coding and thematic analyses were performed.

Regarding the scholarly publication process, the themes titled as "authoring", "peer reviewing", "editing",n"publication ethics", "dissatisfaction," and "suggestions" emerged in the analysis of the data.

The results obtained in this research render academics' experiences in the publication processes visible. Thus, it enables publication integrity assessment by focusing on the three important agents of the scholarly publication process: the author, reviewer, and the editor.

Reviewing the related literature revealed very few studies on publication processes of health sciences academics'. Discussing and revealing the experiences of academics related to the publication process is necessary to increase the transparency and quality of this process. Thus, this study can serve as a guide for future studies.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Author, Editor, Peer Review, Scholarly Publication.

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, bir grup sağlık bilimleri akademisyeninin bilimsel yayın üretme deneyiminin özünü ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Nitel yönteme dayalı fenomenolojik yaklaşımla yürütülen bu çalışmada, katılımcıların seçiminde amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak katılımcılarla derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Veri toplama sürecinin sonlandırılmasında verilerin doygunluğa ulaşması temel alınmıştır. Bu bağlamda çalışmada 12 akademisyen yer almıştır. Görüşme kayıtları araştırmacılar tarafından yazıya döküldükten sonra MAXQDA 2022 programına aktarılmış, kodlama ve tematik analiz yapılmıştır.

Bilimsel yayın sürecine ilişkin olarak verilerin analizinde "yazarlık", "akran değerlendirmesi", "editörlük", "yayın etiği", "memnuniyetsizlik" ve "öneriler" temaları ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bu araştırmadan elde edilen sonuçlar, akademisyenlerin yayın süreçlerindeki deneyimlerini görünür kılmaktadır. Böylece, bilimsel yayın sürecinin üç önemli temsilcisine (yazar, hakem ve editör) odaklanarak yayın bütünlüğünün değerlendirilmesi olanaklı olmuştur.

Literatür incelendiğinde sağlık bilimleri akademisyenlerinin yayın süreçleri ile ilgili çok az sayıda çalışmaya rastlanmaktadır. Akademisyenlerin yayın sürecine ilişkin deneyimlerinin tartışılması ve ortaya çıkarılması bu sürecin şeffaflığının ve kalitesinin artırılması için gereklidir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, bundan sonraki araştırmalar için yol gösterici olabilir.

Keywords: Yazar, Editör, Akran Değerlendirmesi, Bilimsel Yayın.

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INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that a country's capacity to produce knowledge is of great importance for increasing its economic, health and living standards[1]. The information produced especially in the field of health is important for the welfare of individuals in particular and for public health in general. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate the production stages of scientific knowledge in this field.

Academics conduct various types of research, whether related to their own fields or interdisciplinary, and report the results in different ways. They spend a lot of time and effort in the process of publishing their research in a journal, which is labor-intensive and take a very long time to prepare[2]. Studies completed by authors are reviewed by editors and reviewers. Therefore, peer review is the primary method used to make publication decisions about a manuscript. With this method, the quality, methodological rigor, contribution, and publishability of the manuscript are reviewed properly. Thus, the quality of the manuscript is shaped by the adequacy and effectiveness of peer review[3]. Editors and reviewers play a key role at this stage and often do this on a voluntary basis. However, especially in publishing houses abroad, editorial processes can be regarded as a job and paid for[4]. Both situations can affect academics in different ways. Sometimes, the different workloads of the reviewers to review the publication or their large number of reviews can negatively affect the quality of the review process[5]. However, academics are affected by many different factors, such as the fact that the reviewing processes are lengthy, the manuscripts are not assigned to eligible reviewers, or the reviewer does not realize the value of the study, and sometimes the reviewer makes a political decision[6-7].

Scientific research methods are frequently discussed in the academic community and are the subject of research. However, requiring almost as much effort, patience and energy as the completion of the research stage of a study is the scholarly publication stage, which is not discussed much. Hence, what happens in this process is not visible. However, in order for the results of a study to be announced and reach the reader, it must be published. In addition, the publication of the study is both the main source of motivation for researchers and a prerequisite for academic progress. On the other hand, academics play various roles (as author, peer reviewer, or editor) in this process. What academics experience in each of these roles is also a matter of curiosity. In recent years, problems in reviews, difficulties in the publication process, and the length of the review period have strengthened the academic interest in these issues. However, there is a very limited number of studies in the literature regarding this issue. These studies focus on peer-reviews, reviews on editorial and publication processes, the reliability of reviews in open access or subscription journals, and the length of publication duration[3-14]. However, there seems to be an urgent need to reveal experiences to make this process more transparent and to discuss what actually happens in this process. Therefore, this phenomenology study aims to reveal the essence of a group of health sciences academics'experiences in publishing process.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study Design

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method used to reveal participant experiences about a phenomenon in depth[15,16]. As such, the current study aims to reveal the essence of the scholarly publication experiences of academics working in the field of health sciences.

Research Questions

- What is it like to be an author for health sciences academics?

- What is it like to be a peer reviewer for health sciences academics?

- What is it like to be an editor for health sciences academics?

- How do health sciences academics view the scholarly publication process in terms of publication ethics?

- What do health sciences academics suggest for the problems related to their author, reviewer, or editor roles?

Inclusion Criteria for the Participants

To achieve the purpose of the research, it is important that the participants have a common experience with the phenomenon. Therefore, criterion-based sampling, a purposive sampling method, was used in the present study. Besides, in the selection of the study group heterogeneity was achieved by representation of various scientific disciplines and academic titles.

Accordingly, the inclusion criteria are as follows:

1. Being an academic in the field of health sciences

2. To be a PhD graduate

3. Having published in national and international journals

4. Being a corresponding author

There were 56 health science academics from various disciplines who met the inclusion criteria in the institution where the research was conducted. The disciplines of these academics are nutrition and dietetics, child development, speech and language therapy, midwifery, physical therapy and rehabilitation, nursing, audiology, orthotics-prosthetics, health management and social work. The researchers contacted professors, associate professors and assistant professors in these fields. After the preliminary interview, in-depth interviews were held with the volunteer academics who agreed to participate in the research at an appropriate time. In the interviews with the participants, the data was observed to become repetitive after a while. The data collection process was terminated after the 12th participant, where the data reached saturation.

Ethical Aspect of Research

Permission was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee with the date 31.12.2021 and the decision number 2021-1096 for this research. To reach the academics, written permission was obtained from the faculty where the academics work. Before being included in the research, the participants were informed about the purpose and process of the research and how the information obtained from them would be used. Signed consent regarding participation in the study was obtained from each participant through an informed consent form. Participation was on a voluntary basis and the participants were told that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. To avoid data loss, the interviews were voice recorded, with the consent of the participants.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used as a data collection tool. Expert opinion was taken for the questions in this form and the functionality of the questions was tested by conducting two pilot interviews, following which the questions were revised and finalized. The questionnaire included questions about personal information including discipline and title, as well as questions that would allow the participants to convey their experiences in producing scholarly publications. The questions are clear, understandable, purposeful, open-ended, and non-directive. The in-depth interviews, which lasted 55 minutes on average, were held between 10.02.2022 and 04.03.2022.

Study Group

In this study, the distribution of disciplines was as follows: 2 from nutrition, 1 from language and speech therapy, 3 from midwifery department, 1 from physical therapy and rehabilitation, 2 from nursing, 1 from orthotics-prosthesis, 1 from health management, and 1 from social work department. Considering a distribution on the basis of the ratio of the academics' titles in the

faculty, 2 professors, 3 associate professors and 7 assistant professors were included. Thus, 12 health sciences academics were included in the study.

Data Analysis

The interview records were transcribed by the researchers. All the transcripts were then transferred to the MAXQDA 2022 program through which they were coded and thematic analysis was performed. In the analysis process, the transcripts containing the raw data were read repeatedly, the data were divided into conceptual categories, and the themes were reached by establishing relations between the codes, during which open, axial and selective coding stages were followed. With open coding, initial codes were created, then the codes were associated with each other and many closely related concepts were gathered under a more general concept. Finally, the main themes of the study were reached by rearranging the themes determined in the previous coding. Two different researchers worked to code the research data and find the themes. Codes were used for the participants and some personal information was modified to protect their privacy. This research was reported according to SRQR[17].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to reveal the essence of academics' experiences in producing scholarly publications, for which the following themes were obtained: "*authoring*", "*peer reviewing"* and "*editing*" experiences, "*publication ethics*", "*dissatisfaction*" and "*suggestions*" regarding the publication process.

Authoring Experiences

"*Journal selection*" is an important theme for the studies in which the participants were authors. The *factors related to the journal* are highlighted when the authors select the journal. *The index of the journal, impact factor, publication time, journals not being predatory, previously published publications, and the journal's non-automatic-response, communicating with editor directly* were defined as important criteria. These indicate the key factors paid attention by authors in their journal selection. Also, authors choose journals according to *the methodology and subject of the study*. However, it is noteworthy that the authors focus on factors such as index, wait time before publication, and communication before the subject and method in the publication process, which shows authors' primary concerns over the subject and method during the publication.

"I'm looking at journals' indexes." (P11)

"I choose the journal based on the impact factor." (P4)

"...I am not in favor of publishing in the journals that are described as predatory." (P6)

In addition, *the status of meeting the academic promotion criteria* by the journal is important for the authors. But the authors described publishing to fulfill the criteria as a factor that *causes significant pressure as well as unqualified publications and barriers the potential*. Academic promotion criteria should be questioned in terms of the quality of academic publications because basic values such as "idealism" and "curiosity" may be ignored in publications made to meet only one criterion.

"And of course, you know, there are certain criteria that we have to meet. I try to consider such criteria." (P10)

"He needs to make his publications idealistically, but unfortunately it doesn't work." (P11)

In the evaluations of the authors for their work, the "*rejection reason*" was highlighted as the fact that *the publication was not suitable for the journal*.

"...was rejected as incompatible with the journal." (P4)

There, the authors emphasized that the reasons for rejection should be expressed clearly, which is important for both transparency and learning.

"...even if the editor rejects it for this reason, the reasons for the rejection should be specific. Because right there, one learns." (P5)

Then the other justification was methodological errors and deficiencies. However, *language editing and the fact that the subject is not up-to-date* are defined as rejection in some cases and as a reason for revision in some cases. Additionally, the authors stated that they could receive corrections in any part of their study (title, abstract, introduction, method, findings, discussion, conclusion and bibliography) and in the format.

"Unfortunately, it is really different from the writing of a native English author. Our sentences are a little simpler and are mostly translated." (P4)

In some cases, the authors expressed that they wanted to "*withdraw*" their study. *Lengthened review period* and *the inability to get a response from the editor* were given as the reasons. *Noticing an error/shortcoming in the study* and *thinking that the study could be published in a better journal* were stated as the other reasons for withdrawal.

".of course, you can change your mind for it to be published in a better journal with a different index value, but it isn't the right thing." (P2)

The academics' experiences in the role of author fall under the themes of journal selection, reason for rejection, justification for revision, request for withdrawal, and publication to meet criteria. While choosing the journal, academics pay attention to the factors related to the journal (the journal's index, impact factor, average time before publication, lack of questionability, previously published publications, the editor of the journal and the journal non-automatic response, meeting the assignment criteria), the design (method) and the subject of the study. Considering the reasons for rejection, the most frequently cited reason was the inappropriateness of the manuscript for the journal. Then, method-based errors and deficiencies were reported as the reasons for rejection. Need for proofreading and the fact that the subject is not up-to-date were given as the basis for rejection in some cases and as a reason for revision in some others. Additionally, the authors stated that they were able to receive revision requests for a shortcoming in any part or form of their work. Regarding manuscript withdrawal, the primary reason given was that the review took too long. Many variables can affect the speed of the editorial process, including the demand for the journal, the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the editorial team, the number of issues the journals publish per year, the number of articles included in these issues, and the acceptance/rejection rates[2]. The obsolescence of the data was reported as the greatest reason for withdrawal by the authors, which was followed by not getting a response from the editor, noticing an error/deficiency in the study, or thinking the study could be published in a better journal.

The majority of the academics have at least one experience with withdrawing their submissions. The withdrawal request is usually made due to delays in and dissatisfaction with the process. Yet, although the authors think that they may want to withdraw their manuscripts thinking that it will be published in a better journal, they also state that this is unethical. On the other hand, publishing to meet the institutional promotion criterion, which is the last theme emerging within the scope of authorship experience, creates pressure on academics, results in poor-quality publications, and hinders potential. Ak and Gülmez[18] emphasize that giving priority to the number of publications in academic promotions lowers publication quality.

Peer Reviewing Experiences

Participants defined some "*evaluation criteria*" regarding the studies they received when they took part in the process as a peer reviewer, and stated that they checked its *authenticity* in the first place.

"...if it is authentic and really contributes something to the literature." (P11)

Then, *the similarity rate* of the study, *its quality*, and *its contribution to the field and society* were the dimensions examined. These criteria give some significant clues about the review process.

"...I immediately use plagiarism programs regarding the similarity rate of incoming articles." (P1)

"...I also think that creating a digital garbage is wrong. In the end, the same is true for me, if I'm not going to make a publication that will add something of quality, it's pointless." (P6)

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the manuscripts with deficiencies are grouped as those that require "minor revision" and those "rejected" by the academics. This grouping gives an idea about the priorities and essentials in the studies. In the studies reviewed by the peer reviewer, *deficiencies in language and expression (fluency)* were defined intensively among the "*reasons for correction*".

"...can someone who doesn't know at all understand and perceive that article upon receiving it, at least what it is trying to say, what it is trying to do." (P7)

On the other hand, *deficiencies/errors related to the method* were primarily included among the "*reasons for rejection*" by the peer reviewer. Thus, *the alignment of the method with the research questions, the selection and size of the sample*, and *the accuracy of the analyses* were highlighted.

"...the method is particularly important to me. Is the subject suitable for the sample group, how the number of samples is determined, if it is quantitative or qualitative, how is it determined, is the appropriate sample selected, does it fit the purpose and whether due attempt has been made. If my answer is positive for these, I do not reject it, and move on to the revision part." (P3)

Also, *the justification of the study* and *its contribution* are among the reasons for rejection.

"...if there is no professional contribution, I can refuse." (P10)

Furthermore, *the absence of ethics committee approval* is another important reason for rejection:

"...it is absolutely necessary to get the approval of the ethics committee because sometimes this person doesn't even have the date when the sample group was collected in the publication review." (P8)

Reviewers generally defined "*their reviewing processes*" as "*I try to review them in a short time*", "*I review them objectively*". On the other hand, they reported that reviewing *increases the workload* and *takes a lot of time*. They stated that they *accept the reviewing offers if they have suitable time, and sometimes they reject them*. *The motivation of reviewing* is defined as *reading what is done in different research, following the literature, reading before it is published, and making a contribution to the field*.

On the other hand, most of the reviewers act as "*reviewer by journal*". When the participants compared the TR index and the reviewing in journals with an international index such as SCI, the index of the journal was emphasized to affect the reviewing process. However, they also stated that the rules and checklists of the journals guide the review process.

"That's why, in a reviewing in the TR Index, something like doing a different statistic might not be necessary, but if you are reviewing SCI journals, a reviewer might need to give feedback like it isn't enough for this journal and further analysis is needed." (P4)

Academics consider some criteria when reviewing a publication in light of their experience for the manuscripts for which they are reviewers. These criteria are listed as authenticity, similarity rate, quality, contribution to the field and society, fluency in language and expression, adequacy of literature review and discussion. Also, the reviewers defined some grounds for rejection, and methodological problems, rationale for the study, professional contribution, and

ethics committee approval emerged as the sine-qua-non publication requirements for them. Failing to meet these requirements results in straightforward rejection. On the other hand, the motivation of reviewing is another critical aspect for the continuation of reviewing, which is an important workload. Kearney et al.[5] found that reviewers spend an average of 5 hours for each review and complete an average of 7-8 reviews per year, and they report excessive workload and lack of time as the most common problems reviewers encounter. The factors related to reviewing motivation (reading what is done in other studies, following the literature, reading before it is published and contributing to the field) that emerged in this study are important for understanding academics to improve the reviewing system, a conclusion supported by the relevant literature[5,11]. Reviewing according to the journal was another emergent theme. As such, the reviewing performances of reviewers vary on the basis of variables such as the index and rules of the journal, indicating that the quality of the journal and the expectations of the journal from the reviewer are important determinants. such variation in reviewers' attitude can be interpreted as "arbitrariness". On the other hand, Brezis and Birukou[3] show the variation in the time allocated for peer review as the main reason for arbitrariness. To prevent arbitrariness, it may be helpful to set standard rules and checklists and follow the implementation process.

Editorial Experiences

When the participants serve as an editor, they first examine *the appropriateness of the study for the journal* while making a "*decision to review the publication*". The first criterion to be evaluated is that the studies are suitable for the vision, mission, field, and readership of the journal.

"…is it appropriate to publish this subject in our journal?" (P10)

Then, the *authenticity and up-to-datedness of the studies* are important for the editors. The subject covered in the study is required not to have been previously studied or to bring an innovation.

"In other words, it should definitely go beyond what has been done and, if possible, present new information to the reader and push them to think more, to show that there are things to research at different points." (P2)

Third, the editors examine the method while deciding to review the studies. The editors stated that if there are relatively minor deficiencies in the method that can be corrected, they can accept the publication for review. However, if there is an important error or deficiency in the method that cannot be corrected, they reject the publication right away.

"If the biggest problem is in the method, you cannot change it much because if the method is problematic, it goes to rejection." (P9)

The suitability, authenticity, and method of the study for the journal were the prominent review criteria for the editors. However, there are other factors considered by the editors in the review process. These are:

- Contribution of the study to society and literature,

"When I was reading about how it would reflect on society, humanity and the field, I would wear glasses like this and it would be a guide that I created myself, based on what I got from there." (P6)

- The publication can be cited,

"…I would definitely look for a publication that I foresee could be cited" (P4)

- Spelling rules and care,

"Is it written properly, it could be, for example, is the name of the previous journal he uploaded previously left, is it careful, is the date cared?" (P4)

- Ethical rules,

"…was it conducted within the framework of ethical rules?" (P8)

- Similarity rate,

"We consider the similarity rate in the preliminary evaluation." (P10)

Another burning issue for the editors was the "*peer reviewer selection*", where the characteristics of the reviewer, the field, and expertise of the reviewer are valuable to review the study in a satisfactory way. However, they stated that while choosing the peer reviewer, they sometimes have difficulties in finding an expert reviewer suitable for the subject of the study. As can be seen, journals have different approaches to reviewer selection.

"...journals may have a hard time finding reviewer." (P4)

"...the reviewers' field is very precious, very special." (P10)

Examining the editorial experiences of academics, some factors considered when making the decision to review a manuscript were also identified. These factors are similar to the factor in the study of Olkun[19], which revealed that editors try to ensure that the research subjects are not unimportant, local, superficial, or outdated. In the current study, the appropriateness of the manuscript for the journal, originality, and the research method were the prominent evaluation criteria for the editors, and indispensable qualities for a study. A deficiency in these issues may lead the study to be rejected without even being sent to the review. Also, the contribution of the study to the society and the literature, the degree of probability that it can be cited, proper spelling, compliance with the ethical rules, and the similarity rate are listed as the prerequisites considered for the manuscript to be sent for review.

Publishing Ethics

When the participants took part in the publication process as authors, reviewers or editors, their specific experiences regarding publication ethics emerged, revealing the "*bias/objectivity*" as the prominent theme. Participants generally think the studies are reviewed objectively. However, they also believe some factors may have an impact on the editors and reviewers during the review process. Academics sometimes have doubts about the objective review of their work, on which they stated that they occasionally felt that *the title of the authors, recognition, cultural factors, and personal relationships* had an impact on the review process, both in national and international journals. However, they think this differs according to the journal, as some journals are objective while some contain bias.

"The priority is given to that school group, and sometimes the publications of higher-level professors they know in terms of their careers are sometimes given priority." (P8)

"There were points I thought were biased for publishing from Turkey." (P10)

"In other words, if the study is a store, a restaurant, here is that professor's title and the institution he is affiliated with, is his view from the window. If the person in the window is a professor, and if he has a personal relationship before, it is possible to enter the store from there, but if he is someone not known, whose name isn't heard, who isn't part of an institution, he is more cautious to see if there is anything." (P6)

In addition, the *human factor* is also thought to play a part in the process.

"There is no possibility that I wouldn't act emotionally in a place that I choose, I guide where there is the basic human factor." (P7)

Academics also have different views on the nomination of reviewers by authors. Most academics do not find it ethical that the authors suggest a reviewer.

"If, for example, the journal asks for reviewer while sending the publication, I think that this shouldn't be considered appropriate, I shouldn't recommend the reviewer. The reviewer should be chosen completely randomly and from relevant people and there should be an exceptionally large pool. (P8)

Academics not finding the authors having reviewer nominations ethical state that this is intended to facilitate the work of the journal, and this turns into the selection of someone from their social circle, which can work against the principle of blind review.

"The process recommends someone from among the professors I know." (P6)

"It can function as a reviewer nomination that will minimize time pressure and give the least correction, rather than the reviewer's field of interest or the specific subject being studied, which is one of the negative points." (P10)

Academics finding reviewer nomination ethical think that this helps learning about the leading professors in the field and speed up the process.

"To learn about the professors who study the subject." (P4)

In terms of publication ethics, there are two different views on "*editors seeing the name of the author in the publication that is forwarded to them*". Some participants said that the editors should "see" the name of the author in the publication they received, while some said that they should not. The participants arguing editors should see the author's name mention that this is important when managing the peer review process. This is stated to be necessary for a review nomination not to be sent to someone at the same institution as the author or to himself. It is even thought that blinding the received manuscript may cause other problems.

"When we write a keyword, the author himself appears as the reviewer. So naturally, we shouldn't assign the writer himself as the reviewer." (P10)

The academics arguing the editors should not see the name of the author in the publication having reached them, indicate that it may affect the objectivity of the editor.

"The editor can appoint a reviewer according to the person." (P11)

Yet, unlike these two views, some academics state that the editor can see the names of the authors, but not the field editors.

Participants think that when they serve as a reviewer or an editor, they review "*the work that is sent to them*" objectively. Some participants stated that they encountered some requests made by the editors or directly by the authors. They stated that these requests were aimed at speeding up the review process. However, they stated it did not prevent them from expressing their views on the study, and they were still able to review the study objectively.

"No, I don't think so, no, I think I'm being objective about that." (P12)

Another issue that academics touched upon about publication ethics was about "*predatory*" journals, about which, the participants stated that they refrain from publishing in these journals because publishing in them can bring about a negative labeling. However, they stated that sufficient information was not provided about these journals, and therefore they developed an attitude of avoiding all paid journals.

"There is not enough information about predatory journals." (P1)

Finally, "*non-open access publications*" are considered unethical by some academics. They emphasized that it causes access inequality due to the social, cultural and economic differences of researchers.

"The person with good economic status has the right to access to this information and read the valuable information in this article, but people from low and middle economic level countries cannot access this information. It doesn't seem humanistic and ethical to me." (P6)

Within the scope of publication ethics, which is another theme, bias/objectivity has come to the fore. Academics believe the title of the authors, recognition, cultural factors, and personal relationships are critical in the review process, which is considered unethical. Similarly, there are findings in the literature showing that "nationality, language and affiliation" causes prejudice. In addition, there are results in the literature showing that gender and class stratification in the scientific community also pave the way for prejudice[12,20-23].

Author nomination of a reviewer and editors' seeing the name of the author in the manuscript they receive (non-blinded review) are some hotly-debated ethical issues, regarding which varying opinions emerged. While some academics find author-nominated

reviewers necessary to speed up the system, some find it inappropriate as it may affect impartiality. Therefore, what purpose the reviewer nomination serves is a principal concern. If such nomination is done to identify experts working in the field, it increases the review quality of the study. However, when the human factor comes into play, it turns into a way of nominating to people with close relations, indicating a problematic situation. When journals and editors prefer this system, it is important to check how the system works and to be meticulous in appointing reviewers. Similarly, the fact that the editors see the name of the author raises concerns that personal networking may be reflected in the process. However, editors' never seeing the names carries risks that may create other ethical violations. Hence, if names are not seen by the field editors, reviewers are assigned by the field editors and these reviewers are approved by the chief editors, this may increase objectivity.

Overall, the participants find their reviewing processes to be satisfactory, and they claim that when they themselves become reviewers or editors, they do their job objectively. Some participants reported that they received some requests that could be defined as unethical and stated that it did not prevent them from being impartial. However, considering the level of self-criticism and subjective self-evaluation of the participants, this finding needs to be approached cautiously. It should be noted that it is important for the editors to be equally impartial with the reviewers and to communicate well with the authors to increase the satisfaction of the authors[8].

Concerns about predatory journals were also stressed by the participants, and defined as an ongoing serious problem. When academics under pressure to publish do not have sufficient knowledge and experience, they may not be able to distinguish these journals from ethical ones and may experience problems in their personal rights. On the other hand, some academics can also ensure that their studies of dubious quality are published in exchange for money[24]. Therefore, tracking these journals and announcing predatory journal lists to inform academics may be necessary. As a matter of fact, studies in the literature found that a significant number of researchers were not aware of these journals[6,11]. Informing researchers about predatory journals, which attract researchers with the promise of rapid publication, as well as revising the current rules on research incentives is important for researchers to maintain their reputation[6,11,13]. Thus, the influence of predatory publishing, which is a growing threat to the academic community, can be reduced. Furthermore, the restriction of access to information by non-open access publications was defined as unethical by the participants, which is thought to create an inequality of opportunity in terms of accessing and following scholarly publications.

Dissatisfaction with the Scholarly Publishing Process

The discontent of the participants with the publication production process was an important theme at which "*expenditures made during the publication process*" is described as an important challenge for academics. These expenditures make it difficult to produce publications and reduce international competitiveness. Limited financial support in the publishing process forces academics cover these expenses themselves. The highest amount of expenditures are made by academics on translation and editing, statistical analysis, journal fees, and obtaining the necessary materials for research. The areas where the academics spend the most are listed as translation and editing, statistical analysis, journal fees, and obtaining the materials needed for research.

"... There will be serious financial burdens, and I think an academic has almost no chance of meeting it." (P3)

"Currently, for example, the fact that many journals are paid is a big problem for us. Journals that were published for free until 3-4 years ago are now paid." (P4)

In addition to these expenditures, there are other problems that academics encounter and

describe discontent in the process of producing scholarly publications. These are:

- Being alone at the beginning of academic life / not being able to receive counseling or supervision,

"….. It is quite easy to walk on a snowy road that someone has opened, but if you must pave that path yourself, it's more complicated and difficult." (P6)

"From the beginning of a research to its publication, the hardest part is that we are alone in this process. Being alone is awfully bad." (P5)

- Having to wait a long time,

"Your data that you send to another journal after waiting too long becomes obsolete." (P3)

- Not being able to communicate with the editor, the journal,

"…failure to provide sufficient communication" (P8)

- Time pressure,

"To organize the research, you let go of all your other roles, the role of a spouse, or a friend, you leave them all behind and go and deal with a publication." (P7)

The inability of academics to access the counseling support they need at the beginning of their academic career makes them feel lonely. Also, academics have to wait for a long time in the publication process, they could not communicate adequately with the journal they sent their publications to, and the hard work and labor in the process of presenting the study creates time pressure.

- Health science specific challenges,

Academics publishing in the field of health sciences defined the low number of journals (especially SCI-SSCI indexed) as a challenge specific to this field.

"The number of journals has also decreased a lot because you have to pay a fee and you have serious problems in finding the free and field-specific journal that is suitable for you." (P3)

Another challenge academics expressed in this field is associated with c*onducting intervention research.* Academics state that high-quality journals especially accept research based on intervention. However, it is very difficult to obtain ethical permission to conduct research based on intervention, which slows them down. Additionally, the fact that the field of health sciences is not a field that directly allows intervention is another difficulty defined as *a state of being in between*.

"We cannot immediately reveal intervention in terms of ethical, economic, time and patient potential. I can say that this process slows us down or makes it difficult." (P10)

"It's because we're the in-between group. We're not exactly abstract, but we're not as concrete and developmental as a medic." (P3)

Teka et al.[25] listed the barriers most cited by academics as lack of recognition, lack of institutional research journal, insufficient access to information resources, limited research opportunities, lack of financial incentives, and lack of institutional/departmental support for publication. Similar results were obtained in this study. The most common dissatisfaction reported by the academics regarding the publication process was related to the expenses they had to make in the publication production process, with translation and editing, statistical analysis, journal /open access fees, and materials required for research being the most notable expenditures. Academics have difficulties in meeting these expenses, which is an important factor in research quality. Abbott and Doucouliagos[1] emphasize the importance of providing sufficient research funding to ensure it achieves its goals. Also, the inability of academics to access the counseling support they need at the beginning of their academic career causes them to feel lonely. Academics at the beginning of their professional careers should be supported more to increase their publication productivity[24]. In another study[26], weak colleague cooperation, lack of organizational support, and career

advancement standards were identified as major challenges for academics. Additionally, the participants in the current study had to wait for a long time during the publication process; they could not adequately communicate with the journal they sent their publications to, and the intense work and labor in the process of presenting the study created time pressure on them. The main reason for this pressure is thought to be related to the publication requirement for academic progress. However, the systematic review by Aboagye et al.[27] found that the organizational and psychosocial characteristics of academic settings play a significant role in the productivity of research.

Specific to the field of health sciences, the low number of journals (especially with the SCI-SSCI index), research based on interventions, and in-betweenness were identified as significant difficulties. The difficulty of obtaining ethics committee approval in invasive and the questioning of the competence to attempt an intervention were highlighted. Besides, that the field of health sciences has both positive and social science-specific qualities creates an extra challenge for academics working in this field, as they are not as free to express themselves as in other disciplines. The participants stated there are departments from many different disciplines in the field of health sciences, and an unfair situation may arise when standard criteria covering all departments are in place. As such, it is recommended to develop a scientific performance evaluation process that maintains the balance between research and teaching, and that can increase the number and quality of publications at the same time[18].

Suggestions on the Scholarly Publication Process

The suggestions of the academics for the solution of the problems they encountered during the publication process is an important theme. These suggestions are:

- *Providing financial incentives and various supports.* Academics state that some support should be granted to cover their expenses during the publication process. When SCI publication is made, the need for international support, support for statistical analysis and translation / editing assistance is emphasized.

"There are already lecturers in English at universities, there are statisticians, I wish we had such support." (P11)

- *Development of journal publication processes.* The academics suggest that journals set deadlines, keep this period short and not extend it. They also state that the journal must have a detailed review checklist. Some academics suggest that the reviewer pool of the journals should be expanded to shorten the review period and to find suitable reviewer. Moreover, it is an important suggestion for journals to include reviewer in the reviewing system after being trained.

"There must be absolutely a large pool." (P8)

- *Increasing peer reviewing motivation.* It is another suggestion to encourage and increase the motivation of academics to act as reviewer. Some academics argue that reviewing should be a paid task, while others argue that reviewers should not be paid. Instead, they suggest revising the score given for reviewing.

"Our review score is very low. So when you do this, the value you get in return is not worth it." (P2)

- *Facilitating research opportunities.* Some academics emphasize facilitating opportunities rather than incentives.

"Let them increase our research opportunities, so we can work more easily… I think there should be mechanisms to facilitate the process of carrying the study out, appropriate laboratories, that is, the infrastructure." (P12)

- *Peer support.* The importance of peer support is emphasized.

"Peers are also good in this sense, in other words, asking him about it, sometimes even talking with friends from different departments makes people comfortable, so we see everyone goes through the same process." (P5)

- *Giving specific trainings on the publication process in postgraduate education.* Academics are recommended to receive training on issues related to the publication process such as journal indexes, reviewing, and editorship, thus improving their knowledge and skills.

"Reviewing needs to be transformed into a developmental process, I don't think reviewing means just that, I reviewed it, I rejected or approved. It can be a guide for those who are on the path of academic development, along with small suggestions, so this is valuable for me. (P6)

The suggestions of academics to solve the problems they encounter are also important. While the majority of the academics state that some support should be granted to meet the expenses they make during the publication process, a group of academics underline increasing the opportunities rather than incentives. In addition, improving journal publication processes, increasing reviewing motivation and providing peer support are considered as suggestions that will improve the process. Although contributing to the review processes is a professional and moral obligation, it is important to make this activity as rewarding as possible[28]. Therefore, publishing the names of the reviewer in the journal and giving them awards and appreciation certificates can be a useful strategy[28]. Another suggestion, giving specific trainings on the publishing process in postgraduate education, is considered valuable because there seems to be a need for more discussion of the publication processes and more knowledge and experience is required on this subject. Training academic staff on issues related to the publication process such as journal indexes, reviewing, and editorship can increase the quality of the process.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

We have presented and discussed the experiences academics have when they take on different roles during the scholarly publication processes. Authors, reviewers and editors play an important role in increasing the quality of a manuscript before it reaches the reader, which necessitates publication integrity. Therefore, the role played by the three key actors of scholarly publication process (i.e. the author, reviewer and editor) in publication integrity is discussed. The results obtained in this study make the experiences of academics in these three different roles during publication processes more visible. The emerging major themes regarding faculty experiences in this context are "authoring", "peer reviewing" and "editing", "publication ethics", "dissatisfaction" and "suggestions".

To conclude, authorship, review, and editorial processes, which are defined as the main pillars of the academic publication process, are discussed in this study. Taking part in the process with different roles has different meanings for the participants. Every academic from time to time experiences these roles in some way. In this study, considering the differing experiences specific to all three roles in a holistic context reveals the originality of this study. In particular, it should be noted that when the literature is scanned, the studies on the editorial and peer review process are relatively more, but the studies dealing with the process from the eyes of the authors are very few. Therefore, it was limited to discuss authorship findings in the light of other studies in the literature. On the other hand, it can be said that the findings related to the experience of authorship make an original contribution to the literature. In addition, although the difficulties that academics have identified regarding the publication process are noteworthy, solutions to these difficulties may be useful because these suggestions have emerged from the direct experiences of the people who are directly involved in this process.

This study reflects the experiences of a particular academic group. However, being a qualitative study, it aims to reveal the essence

of the experiences of academics rather than reaching generalizable results. Reviewing the related literature revealed very few studies on publication processes. Therefore, the findings obtained in this study can be discussed only in light of the existing literature findings. On the other hand, there is no study in the literature in which publication-related experiences are discussed based on the qualitative method. Discussing and revealing the experiences of academics related to the publication process is necessary to increase the transparency and quality of this process. Thus, this study can serve as a guide for future studies. This subject should also be dealt with from the perspective of different scientific disciplines (Medicine, Public health, and Natural sciences and Social sciences etc.) so that the current situation can be revealed and the processes can be revised accordingly. The need for such research is particularly urgent today, considering the unprecedented pace of scientific knowledge production.

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