Parallel Session #3:

INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON ASIAN SCHOLARLY JOURNAL EDITORS & PUBLISHERS

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Acknowledgements

- We thank the respondents who freely shared their time and suggestions.
PURPOSE

To examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected Asian scientific journal editors and/or publishers

1) Daily life and work life
2) Identify opinions for anticipated changes

METHODS

Ethical approval was obtained (#HIRB-2020-037)

Online survey from July 13-19, 2020

Distributed to editors/publishers via mailing list of KCSE, Korea Federation of Science and Technology, CASE

19 Questions (5 minutes): 2 Likert items, 13 categorical items, 4 open-ended items

- General characteristics (4 items), change in daily life (2 items), change in work life (7 items), anticipating future needs (6 items)
Out of 1,537 invited via email
152 respondents

- Response rate 9.7%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Editor or editorial board member</th>
<th>Manuscript editor</th>
<th>Staff, academic society</th>
<th>Staff, publishing company</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>110(92.4%)</td>
<td>8(6.7%)</td>
<td>1(0.8%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>119(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research institute</td>
<td>8(88.9%)</td>
<td>1(11.1%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>9(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing company</td>
<td>2(33.3%)</td>
<td>2(33.3%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>2(33.3%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>6(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic society</td>
<td>2(14.3%)</td>
<td>4(28.6%)</td>
<td>8(57.1%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>14(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1(25.0%)</td>
<td>2(50.0%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>0(0.0%)</td>
<td>1(25.0%)</td>
<td>4(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>123(80.9%)</td>
<td>17(11.2%)</td>
<td>9(5.9%)</td>
<td>2(1.3%)</td>
<td>1(0.7%)</td>
<td>152(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<Table 1> Affiliation and primary role of respondents (N=152)
Anxiety level and time spent on the internet showed a weak, but statistically significant correlation ($r=0.1986$, $p=0.0142$)
Change in main work place?

- 52.6% Yes (at home; alternatively at home/office)
- 47.4% No change

Work load of editing, reviewing, publishing?

- 58.7% No change
- 34.2% Increased
  - Natural sciences (45.0%) 9/20; Art, humanities, social sciences (44.4%)
  - Medical/health sciences (32.3%); Agriculture, fisheries (33.3%)
  - Engineering (28.6%)

Difficulty communicating with editorial members/publisher?

- 73% No vs 27% Yes
Any changes in the number of submissions to your main journal compared to previous years? (%)

- I do not know. 9.9%
- Submissions have decreased. 15.8%
- No change. 45.4%
- Submissions have increased. 28.9%

Increased submissions:
- Art, humanities, social sciences (44.4%): 8/18
- Natural sciences (35%) 7/20
- Medical/health sciences (32.3%) 21/65
- Agriculture, fisheries (25%) 3/12
- Engineering (14.3%) 5/35
Would you say more time is spent on reviewing or editing manuscripts since COVID-19? (%)

- Decrease in time spent: 7.2%
- No change: 59.2%
- Increased in time spent: 33.6%

Thus, Submission changes ‘don’t know’ (n=15) removed, Decreased load + no change $\rightarrow$ ‘others’

$df=1, \chi^2=3.84, p=0.0008$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased submissions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increased load</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When you edit or review manuscripts related to COVID-19 (if any), do you give any preference to them, for example, fast-track review? (%)

- Yes (38/69, 55.9%)
- No
- I did not receive submissions related to COVID-19.
- I am not involved in reviewing.
How many times have you attended online training programs for journal editing or publishing, from March to June, 2020? (%)

- More than three times: 12.5%
- Three times: 3.9%
- Twice: 11.2%
- Once: 19.7%
- None: 52.6%

n=80/152

- Suggests the need for more online training opportunities
Do you think that online-only journal publishing will be expanded after the COVID-19 endemic? (%)

Yes n=112/152

Reasons:
- Irreversible trends (38)
- Easy access (7)
- Rapid communication (3)
- Economic advantages (3)
- Non-face to face exchange (1)
Do you think that the need for journal publishing (number of articles or number of journals) will increase after the COVID-19 endemic? (%)

Reasons:
Decreased research activities, including exchange programs (10), no change of the publication environment (10), negative economic impact (3), saturated journal market (3)

Reasons:
Emergence of new topics due to COVID-19 pandemic (11), more time for authors to write (9), expansion of the information market (1), government’s pressure to publish (1)
## Other changes expected from COVID-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No changes (17)</td>
<td>Already online journal; Quality of manuscripts are not affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online publishing related (12)</td>
<td>Online publishing/platforms will increase; Need for open access (OA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online meetings (7)</td>
<td>More editorial board meeting will be held online; Need for collaborative meetings among editors; Training/workshops;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased submissions (7)</td>
<td>Possible cuts in research funds; Difficulties in conducting research; Journal sustainability concerns if COVID-19 continues for a long time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 articles (6)</td>
<td>Publishing guideline for COVID-19 for better sharing of information; Higher citations of COVID-19 articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget issues (3)</td>
<td>OA and low APC; High priced software/services should be lowered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing issues (3)</td>
<td>Deadline pressure; Need for more personnel in case of COVID-19 infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing (2)</td>
<td>Rapid/sound reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preprint (2)</td>
<td>Greater awareness of preprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Increased competition; Unpredictable</td>
</tr>
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Suggested topics for future training programs related to editing or publishing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editing (15)</td>
<td>How to attract quality manuscripts; Manuscript handling; Quality improvement; Rules for fast-track publishing; AI in publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication ethics (9)</td>
<td>Fast-track publication and ethical issues; Retraction of articles; Best practices of ethics/editorial flow; Plagiarism check training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication (8)</td>
<td>Practical OJS; Plan S; Digital standards for online journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online training (4)</td>
<td>More detailed online training tools; Regular learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review (4)</td>
<td>Effective reviewing; getting quick review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexing (2)</td>
<td>International DB indexing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration (1)</td>
<td>Collaborating with other editors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSIONS

- The COVID-19 pandemic was a source of considerable anxiety for more than one-third of Asian editors and publishers, especially as they spent more time on the internet.

- Some worked harder during the COVID-19 pandemic period than before and their increased workload was associated with an increased number of submissions.

- As such, a closer examination of editor and publishers’ work and anxiety may be needed as the pandemic drags on.

- Traditional topics for training programs were still valid (e.g., publication ethics, more advanced journal management, and editors’ collaboration, etc.). But a sizable proportion of respondents believed that more editorial or publishing work would be done via online in the future.

- Thus, preparing editors for automated processing and educating them on digital standards appears to be an emerging area of need.
Thank you for your attention