Status of Scholarly Journals in Ethiopia (Survey Findings)

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Objectives of the Study

- explore the status of scholarly journals in Ethiopia
- identify the benefits of instituting a national system of journal evaluation and accreditation,
- establish benchmarks for such a practice based on the experiences within and outside Ethiopia, and
- recommend a practical mechanism for introducing such a system in Ethiopia.
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Methodology

- Identification of Ethiopia-based scholarly journals
- Data collection
  - Self administered questionnaire;
  - Interview tools for editors;
  - Journal copy review template;
  - Review of print and electronic copies of journal documents; institutional legislations, directives and/or guidelines on reputability of journals
- Triangulation and analysis
Journal identification methods

- Institutional websites
- Journal hosting websites (e.g., AJOL)
- Indexing and abstracting databases
- Library catalogues
- List of journals evaluated by AAU
- *Science and Technology Indicators Report of 2014*
- Through informants
Scholarly journals identified

✓ 67 peer-reviewed Ethiopia-based journals
✓ 7 new journals to be launched
✓ 7 online journals with unverifiable addresses (possibly predatory)
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Number of journals identified and surveyed (surveyed at least by one of the three tools)
## Data collection

### Distribution of journal survey coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journals’ publishers</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Question.</th>
<th>Copy review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public universities</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private universities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional societies</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institution</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t research institutions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total journals surveyed</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Distribution of respondents by role and data collection tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Editor-in-Chief</th>
<th>Co-EiC or Asso. Editor</th>
<th>Managing Editor</th>
<th>Research Director</th>
<th>No info.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey findings

Journals’ Longevity

Number of journals launched
Continuity

- Started in 2016–2017: 9%
- No interruption: 18%
- Some Interruption: 73%
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Online Visibility

- Full text on own website: 3
- Full text at least in one website: 24
- Some information: 12
- None: 28
Accessibility

- Open Access: 22%
- No information: 33%
- Subscription Based: 45%
Editorial Board Profile

Most common criteria for selection of editors or editorial board members are:

✓ membership in college, institute or society,
✓ qualification or rank (often minimum PhD or Assistant Professor),
✓ publication (where available), and
✓ area of specialization (where available).
Editors’ profile (Interview report)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editorial experience In years</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Number of publications</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤ 1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1 to 10</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11 to 20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21 to 30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editorial Board Profile (Contd)

According to the interview reports, a good number of the journals are handled by:

- inexperienced,
- not well-published, and
- mostly of junior academic rank editors and editorial board members.
Editorial Board Profile (Contd)

- In most cases one or two of the selection/appointment criteria were waived.

- The majority of university journals editorial board membership is limited to institutional membership.

- This imposition limits the possibility of tapping scholarly experience and expertise from outside the institution.
Advisory Boards

Most journals:
have advisory boards composed of foreign and Ethiopian professionals

However,
in some journals, the advisory board members have a nominal role with little or no participation in the editorial processes.
Gender Profile of Editorial Roles

Journal copy review (N=38), from available list of editors

- 15 journals have no females in any formal editorial role;
- 23 journals give some editorial role to women, but the role of Editor-in-Chief or Co-EiC were positions exclusively held by men.
- The most senior editorial positions held by women are:
  - Editor (2 women for one medical journal),
  - Associate Editor (5 women for five journals), and
  - Managing Editor (4 women for four journals).

Most of these journals are in the fields of health and natural sciences.
Journal Disciplinary focus and Scope

The majority of the identified journals

• are multi-disciplinary in scope and broad in focus
  Eg. Social Science and Humanities, Science and Technology

• require an editorial board mainly constituted by representatives of various disciplines
Journal Disciplinary Distribution

- Mixed: 12%
- AS: 7%
- Law: 14%
- HS: 16%
- ST: 23%
- SSHE: 28%
Content Profile

- Most journals deal with Ethiopian subjects
- The majority of contributors are Ethiopians
- A sizable proportion of the contributors are from within the journal publishing institutions
Content Profile (Contd)

- Most journals have author/submission guidelines
- A considerable number of the journals have good or very good bibliographic citation standards.
- Most journals have book reviews and short notes, but several of them are not enriched with additional features such as:
  - editorials,
  - topical issues,
  - correspondence, etc.
Content Profile (Contd)

Journal editorial policies often lack:

- copyright policy;
- ethical guidelines;
- review policy;
- errata,
- conflict of interest policy; and
- financial acknowledgements policy

suggesting that the level of accountability, transparency and awareness is low.
Major challenges identified by editors in order of their importance are:

(i) The review process:

• the delay of reviewer responses;
• reluctance of many researchers to review manuscripts even with modest incentives;
• superficial review reports; and
• lack of database on suitable reviewers.
The challenges ..... (contd)

(ii) shortage of resources (financial, support staff, office facilities);
(iii) lack of incentives for editors;
(iv) shortage of manuscripts and low quality of submitted manuscripts;
(v) lack of recognition of journals as a separate unit by the University Senate or legislation (Journals of HEIs);
(vi) academic promotion being the overriding motivation of many authors;
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The challenges ….. (contd)
(vii) low scholarly writing skills of staff;
(viii) lack of experienced and well-published staff eligible for editorial board membership, and inactive advisory boards;
(ix) inadequate commitment to journal’s growth on the part of their parent HEIs, bureaucratic red tape and lack of autonomy, poor internet connectivity;
(x) lack of capacity-building training for editors and journal support staff; and
(xi) rampant plagiarism by authors.
Journal Evaluation

The majority of editors support

- the introduction of a national journal evaluation system,
- the establishment of a legally authorized, independent, national accreditation body, and
- the introduction of a core list of accredited Ethiopian journals.
Journal Evaluation (contd)

Accrediting institution suggested by editors:

- the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences;
- the Ministry of Science and Technology;
- the Ministry of Education;
- a renowned higher education institute;
- a university press, or
- an association of journal editors.
Journal Evaluation (contd)

The major criteria identified by editors for journal evaluation are:

(i) content quality (articles’ quality and relevance to Ethiopia, diversity of scope and international authorship);

(ii) editorial professionalism and quality assurance (review rigor, editor’s and editorial boards’ scholarly profile, basic publishing standards);

(iii) journal sustainability (journal longevity and continuity, working environment); and

(iv) journal impact (distribution and citation analysis).

There is a consensus to give higher weight to the first two criteria in the evaluation.
THANK YOU