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Publish and Stay Imperishable: Scholarly Publications and Pressures of Academia

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ABSTRACT

Going public with publication, surmounting the difficulties and pressures of quantity and quality to fiercely vie for raises, more academic visibility and fame as well as promotions is mostly what drives researchers all over the world particularly university professors. Regardless of the increasing power these forces exercise to publish, few academics actually do. Accordingly, the aim of the present study is to get to the type of sources that push and the hurdles that deter Moroccan research-active academics to yield or to fight back and publish in internationally indexed journals, the way they deal with publish or perish factors, such as stress, burnout, and satisfaction, and the perceived conflict between the teaching profession and research. Though this emerging publish-or-perish culture has ravaged the academic world and classified universities on a scale from the best to the weakest, in Morocco this culture is still not bothering people in charge of higher education especially that the best Moroccan university, Qadi Ayyad in Marrakesh, lies at the bottom of the list worldwide. Thus, for the present research a survey questionnaire was administered to university professors at Ibn Tofail University, Kénitra, Morocco. The study has shown that these individuals have a great awareness of publishing and some of them focused even on doing it at the expense of teaching and in a quick pace over looking quality of their productions.

Keywords: Publish-or-perish culture; academics; academic visibility; quantity and quality.

INTRODUCTION

"Publish or perish", the famous adage reminds us of the fierce academic competition of publishing first and abiding by the disheartening metrics of the international journals. The disadvantage experienced by those who use English as a foreign language in writing for publication as well as the pressures exercised by the educational institutions for either the requirements to defend a doctorate or to get promoted is well illustrated in the literature (Munigal, 2017; Busi, 2013; Harzing, 2013; Glatthorn, 2002, Gomes, 2001). In view of this, one of the major obligations for researchers is to connect globally with other scientists by sharing their findings with other academics. This is done using mostly a linguistic means, English as a case in point, which is foreign to most of the researchers, so another challenge is raised. However, the heavy reliance on international communication of the work produced is not a problem in the present study for the individual targeted have a higher mastery of English. Moreover, the doctrine of publish or perish has its consequences and effects on researchers both academically and pedagogically, and even administratively. Bringing attention therefore to one's publications is not only for promotion necessities or defense reasons but could also in some cases pale into insignificance especially when the reason behind is to show off academically.

The present study aims at getting closer on the experiences of those who have lived through the culture of publish or perish over certain period of their academic lives and investigating their problems and worries. However, the specific objective is to see whether the Moroccan university puts pressure on its academic staff to publish or perish or it is only an escapable fate that the researchers can easily avoid by either producing low quality products or not producing anything at all. Moreover, the aim is also to see which of these researchers feel the pressure and who does not, or who does it at the expense of his/her teaching time and whether other administrative tasks deter them for publishing and therefore doom them to perish.

BACKGROUND

The "Publish-or-Perish" Phenomenon Characterized

The "publish or perish" culture describes the hysterical race to academic publication and has contributed to setting fierce competitiveness as a new scientific benchmark against which the researchers are classified, evaluated, promoted or even fired (Benningh off, 2011). This culture has evidently transformed researchers into contractors who most of the times seek to get promoted at any expense. Therefore, 'publish or perish' denotes the pressure for publication that is increasingly exponentially exercised by universities on academics in internationally indexed journals as a requirement promotion, dissertation defense, or employment (Moosa, 2018). The "publish or perish" is applicable to those working in academia and they are by dint of the canon put forward by this culture to publish, persist or perish. De Rond and Millier (2005) put it succinctly when they said that "The publish or perish principle appears to have become the way of life in academia" (p. 322) suggesting that the process is in a form of "a race against time that typically begins when an academic is hired and comes to an end when he or she is retired or dead" (p. 322).

This culture is consequently set as a standard that enables institutional bodies such as universities to gauge the performance of a researcher against how much he/she publishes otherwise he/she will perish by running the risk of having a large teaching load all his/her working life and be denied promotion. Furthermore, and in particular, for post-graduate students if they are to have the right to defend their dissertations, they are to publish otherwise they will perish and have no chance to find a place in the academic job market. For more senior academics (associate and full professors), to secure a smooth progress through their career, publishing is salient either for academic standing or for doctorate supervisees whom they have to help to publish.

Rewards of "Publish-or-Perish" Culture

If recruitment, promotion, and doctorate defense heavily hinge upon the number and quality of articles published in properly indexed national or international journals, researchers do seem to benefit more from the "publish-or-perish" doctrine. The first perceived benefit is that the pressure exercised by the ethos of "publish-or-

perish" put the academic in a position to show that they really deserve the tertiary level they reached and the scholarly position they enjoy. Their publications are proofs that they are adding to human knowledge and that the ranks they enjoy are not due to favoritism but to hard work where they invested money, effort, and time. The second benefit of the "publish-orperish" culture is that the academics get in the know-how of research and balance the research activity and both the teaching load and the administrative tasks. The third benefit of the "publish-or-perish" dogma is that it enables the researcher to engrave his/her image as an icon of the intellectual society. Many scholars do aspire to get to the apex of what he/she considers "the prestige" of the intellectual internationally, regionally or even nationally. The legitimate question is why is it that these people see publishing for reputation and permanence is more important than publishing for the benefit of humanity?

It seems appropriate at this stage to question the ability of professors to maintain that balance between the research activity and the teaching load. However, how much is considered a quality work to be published and "Why is it that publication is given more importance than other academic duties, and do publications represent the only measure of academic output or performance?" (Moosa, 2018). All of these are appropriate interrogations to be posed. Most of the professors have a hard time balancing their teaching and research activities and most of them hurry up wrapping up their teaching schedules with no consideration whatsoever for students' interests to embark on research projects that they think would enable them to get promoted and stand distinguished the university; others get in it easily through publishing mediocre publications where the quality of their papers or even the soundness of their studies is not even questioned for diverse reasons, among which the predatory types of journals, poor editing, research done by someone else not the researcher himself/herself, and even the mood of the referee sometimes can play a great role in letting such papers get to the wide public.

Cons of "Publish-or-Perish" Culture

Even though the "publish-or-perish" culture seems to put the academics in a privileged stand to benefit from the pressure in many ways, still this dogma can have adverse magnitudes on the same actors. "Publish-or-perish" can magically

"publish and still perish". universities establish the amazing criteria of publish or perish, many scholars rush to publish as many articles as possible for the reasons mentioned earlier: however, these universities are not aware that they are encouraging quantity rather than quality, which has little or none for the advancement of any given area of knowledge. The concern is therefore not the contribution to knowledge or its dissemination, but the concerns are the filling up of CVs as well promotions. Secondly, this incessant fight to come up with a list of publications might cause inflation in the scholarly publication market especially if they are of low quality publications. Complying with the game of "publish-or-perish" rulebooks, researchers and universities unintentionally contribute to a boom publications and as the proverb goes:"it's a challenge to separate the wheat from the chaff" (Taylor & Ryan, 2013) and spot the really exceptional ones. Alas, the copy-andpaste methods using the Net made it easier for so many researchers to compile studies based on others' works. Added to the above cons, even though universities have become "research led" institutions, still the "publish-or-perish" culture in the Moroccan context is impeded by the fact that a great many number of academics including doctorate students, regardless of the theoretical competence, utterly lack basic notions of how to do research, or in case they possess the required research methodology skills many other hindrances interfere, some of which are the cooperation of informants, time management, identification of research gap, financial problems, formatting of text content, and so many others. Additionally, the innovative nature of the research is affected when studies are done on reproducing others' ideas in print and not investing time to come up with original ideas that could contribute to knowledge of the discipline. This process could cost its researcher a life time, and that's why researchers do incline towards reproducing others' studies to get to their ends as quickly as possible.

METHOD

Research Design and Instruments

This study is a descriptive survey that utilized a researcher-made questionnaire as the main tool for gathering the data. The tool consists of close-ended questions which are administered to 81professors who work in different department of the school of arts and humanities in kenitra, Morocco. It should be mentioned that the tool

has been translated into both Arabic and French by the help of two different professors from the Arabic language as well as French language department respectively. After the collection of the responded questionnaire, the gathered data were tallied. The measurement on what is the very difficult item of all the problems that the researchers encountered was determined through qualitative description. The researcher set the degree of measurements for purposes of interpretation.

Sample

To explore the perspectives of the university professors regarding pressure to publish, a questionnaire is handed face-to-face to every individual within the sample chosen (N=81) in 6 different departments of Ibn Tofail University. The questionnaire briefly explains the general purpose, requested faculty participation, and a word assuring anonymity and thank. A survey is assumed to take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The sampling frame is hard to get due to some bureaucratic reasons, and targeting different departments is driven by the idea that all professors experience more or less the same degree of academic pressure when it comes to publishing peer-reviewed journals. Therefore, their contributions to the study would be more enriching in case the English department were the only sampling frame chosen.

Objectives of the Study

To the knowledge of the researcher, none of academics writing in English in Morocco has ever ventured to empirically study the pressures and effects of what is often referred to in the academia the "publish-or-perish" culture. However, given the predominant speculations about this phenomenon in French, the aim of the present study is to explore the obstacles, push and pull factors, the phenomenon ramification as well as the perceived regarding the pressure to publish imperative at the tertiary level.

Research Questions

Because of the paucity of empirical evidence about the complex nature of the publish or perish culture in the Moroccan context, its cons and pros, and its potential effects on academics' future and careers, the statements translating the main objectives of the study are:

- Is there any publish or perish pressure in the Moroccan universities?
- What are the sources of publish or perish pressure in the Moroccan universities?

- What type of hurdles that deter Moroccan research-active academics from publishing in internationally indexed journals?
- How do Moroccan academics deal with the pressures of publish or perish culture?
- Is there any perceived conflict between the teaching vocation and the research activities of Moroccan academics?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The assumed relationships among the main variables is gauged through assessing the reliability and the internal consistency of the data using both the Cronbach's alpha test and the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), especially its simplest variant, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) that is considered as one of the simplest and most robust ways of doing dimensionality reduction. All of the dimensions of this study report Cronbach's alpha to be around .70 (rounded up from .68 after results of the corrected item-total correlations), signalling high reliability standards with a measurement design that is highly credible for this study. The alpha coefficient therefore for the 15 items is .70. suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. It should be noted that exceeding the level .70 is considered good for exploratory research (Nunnally, Fazlagić, 2016, McNaughton, 2007, p. 149; Nichols, 1999 in Stommel Willis, 2004).

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test for the Questionnaire

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of		,612
Sampling Adequacy.		
Bartlett's Test	Approx. Chi-Square	279,517
of Sphericity	Df	91
	Sig.	,000

In the present study (Table 1 above), the KMO value is .612, suggesting the PCA/EFA as a reduction tool is appropriate for this sample. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is another aspect that is related to the appropriateness of the PCA/EFA and which is used to examine the hypothesis that variables are uncorrelated in the sample chosen. The Bartlett's Testis also significant ($X^2=279.517$) as p=0.000 is less than its associated probability value p < 0.005. That is, the significance level is enough to reject the null hypothesis which further suggests that the original EFA is suitable for the current research. In similar vein, it should be note that PCA/EFA works on the assumption that all variance is common (commonalities extracted before and after extraction) or shared. As for the analysis of the research findings, the first question relates to whether the respondents are Assistant, Associate, or Full professors. Therefore, from the frequency distribution and out of the total number of respondents (n=81) constituting the sample, (n=18; 22.2%) are assistant professors, (n=47; 58.0%) are associate professors, and (n=16; 19.8%) are full professors pertaining to different departments of the school of arts and humanities, kénitra, Morocco.

Moreover, out of (n=81), (n=62; 76.5%) seem to be cognizant of the phenomenon of "publish-orperish" culture; however, only (n=13; 16.0%) and (n=6; 7.4%) are partially aware of the phenomenon or have never heard about it respectively. As to the third item in the data collection tool which is used for the present study, (n=30; 37.6%) of the respondents feel the pressure to publish in scholarly books, (n=10; 12.3%)in case studies,(n=14; 17.3%) in textbooks, and (n=14; 17.3%) in articles in peerreviewed as well as (n=13; 16.0%) in articles in editorially reviewed journals. Pertinently, it seems that the respondents do not differentiate between an editorially published article and another that is peer reviewed.

The fourth item in the series of items given to our respondents relates to the case when they feel to publish anything and implore God to survive or spend time to produce a well-crafted type of research and really survive. Thus, (n=54; 66.7%) spend time and invest effort developing significant research; nevertheless, (n=27; 33.3%) tend to publish anything in print for the reasons that shall be obvious later in this study. Always in line with the reasoning that underpin the ramifications behind the "publish-or-perish" pressure, the fifth item shows clearly that regardless of the pressures exercised by this phenomenon, (n=56; 69.1%) of the respondents acknowledge the fact that they produce low quality work and get promoted, get their projects financed, and/or get the respect of colleagues and students. In fact, this is an obvious "shrift" about the academic sin that ills every aspect of academic life particularly on its research side. Furthermore, (n=12; 14.8%) have a habit of producing medium quality research, where as only (n=13; 16.0%) produce high quality research. It could be concluded therefore that the "publish-or-perish" culture does exist within the Moroccan higher institutions and that the Moroccan academics feel the blazing pressure of it.

As far as the first set of hurdles our academics encounter, three types are eminent as problematic dimensions in publication that deter them from publishing. The first of which is closely related to the scientific setbacks where (n=59: 72.8%) of the respondents claim that a study is to be systematically designed, elaborately presented following rigorous methodology, and reproducibly expressed. This category of academics believes in the rigor and systemacity of what to be published as scientific research. However, (n=18: 22.2%) of the same respondents perceive the way a research is written as less salient than having the methodologically needed ingredients. They believe that writers/academics are firmly be sought to prepare texts in proper language, scientific iargon. and punctuation mechanics. Similarly, (n=4; 4.9%) of them think technical issues such as, abstract, acknowledgements, tables, figures, and inhouse/formatting style are the least to worry about when conducting scientific research designed for publishing. It could be concluded that our academics favor some of the components of research and neglect some. However, the appropriate way is to treat these problematic dimensions of research on equal footing if a complete picture of research for the researcher is to be woven. A good research that is worth publishing is the one that observes the format, the content as well as the formatting style ingredient. In concordance with what the respondents' claim (n=59; 72.8%) of them believe that a study is to be systematically designed so that it could be replicable in other contexts, (n=63; 77.8%) of them state that they do not have the necessary means to conduct research in the norms described earlier. But, the surprising is that (n=15; 18.5%) admit having cooked data someday, being lazy to conduct any research, and plagiarized in addition to (n=3; 3.7%) who self-confessed to be utterly incompetent in embarking on any research enterprise. Stating to be in need of material and means to conduct research in the social sciences is no different from other fields where systemacity and rigor is needed, but to selfproclaim that a researcher fabricates data and plagiarizes, that's an alarm bell to be sounded. Academics also feel the pressure to publish from various sources. The first eminent source is that (n=25; 30.9%) colleagues publish under the pressure of colleagues at other universities and oneself followed by the pressure of colleagues at the department, whereas the other sources: the department chair, the dean, the university

administration, and colleagues at the university come following this order (n=2: 2.5%), (n=5: 7.4%), and (n=1; 1.2%)6.2%), (n=6;respectively. Feeling the strength of the pressure of the colleagues from other universities as if colleagues from the same university and department motivating are not factors particularly surprising especially that there should some kind of competition between the academics of the same department and university. The second set of sources concerns the fear of many (n=43; 53.1%) of losing university respect as a university professor followed by fear of losing round in competition to available academic positions (assistantship, associate and full professorship)(n=22; 27.2%). Surprisingly enough is the neglect of fear of losing both the respect of colleagues and 9.9%) and (n=8; 9.9%) students (n=8: respectively. Academics feeling the pressure of "publish-or-perish" and doing so would result in losing respect of university but not colleagues or students are finding that is strangely noted. The third set of "publish-or-perish" pressure sources are four. The first of which is that (n=52; 64.2%) of the academics like to increase their professional development, and this is goes hand in hand with the idea that the same academics publish not to perish because they fear to lose ground in competition to available academic positions. The second source relates to the desire of our respondents (n=9; 11.1%) to leave a permanent mark on their profession when they retire. The other two sources relate to increasing salary and job mobility (n=16; 19.8%) and (n=4; 4.9%) respectively. Many are the ramifications of the "publish-or-perish" culture. The first complication is stress related to tenure. (n=34; 42.0%) of the respondents feel the pressure when it comes to their position and image as Such professors. university a position necessitates that professors publish or otherwise would be looked down by the academia. The second and third difficulties in publish or perish that cause stress are associated with the demanding concerns caused by academic promotion and research production.(n=47; 58.0%; aggregate of stress related to promotion and producing research papers) of our respondents, who are mostly associate professors to whom promotion plays a great importance in their job stability and goes in opposite direction untruthfully to their desire to increase salary (n=16; 19.8%; see item three in publish or perish sources), claim that promotion is a strong driving force as well as the mere thinking about producing research can cause

them strokes of stress. The second ramification of publish or perish culture is the burnout factor. (n=53; 65.4%) admit to experience feeling of emotional fatigue. That is to say, that these researchers feel exhausted as they sense the heavy burden of research and this is again a proof that our respondents are emotionally connected to what they produce as research. Secondly, (n=16; 19.8%) think that the pressure to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals leaves them mentally exhausted. The mental effort exercised by the respondents shows how much this mentally exhausting process takes from researchers. The last group (n=12; 14.8%) believe that the pressure to publish in peerreviewed journals make them think about leaving academia. This is a little bit extremist in the sense that the pressure and competition is so high and fierce that the researchers decide to quit. By way of illustration, I think that the vocation of these researchers is not to do research but to do other things that are not academic in any case. University professors' academic call is mainly to research and teach. To feel exhausted because you do research is justified, but to consider leaving academia because of doing research that's an alarming fact. The third aspect of the publish or perish culture is related to the factor of satisfaction. Many a researcher feel either satisfied or dissatisfied with the process of research publishing to the extent that some feel the urge to quit academia. In the case of our respondents, (n=38; 46.9%) state that they are generally satisfied with the amount of time the vallot to the process of conducting research; a finding that goes hand in hand with their tendency to allocate much time to produce high quality research (n=54; 66.7%) (see item 4 in result and discussion section). The second nuance of our respondents' satisfaction with the publishing pressure relates to their being contented with what their school expects of them as researchers (n=25; 30.9%); however, the remaining ones (n=18; 22.2%) seem to be pleased with the influence they have over the focus of their research. This last three facets of satisfaction of publish or perish pressure reveal one striking illogicality. When a researcher allots much time to a research process, has focus of his or her research, and his/her institution is pleased with what he/she produces academically, he/she has to bear in mind that he/she is to produce high quality research that is based on high focus on methodology mechanisms. Therefore, it could be concluded that the Moroccan academics sometimes exhibit schizophrenic tendencies

when it comes to research, but what is certain is that they deal differently with a plethora of factors related to the publish or perish culture including stress, burnout, and satisfaction. The last two items are grouped under the publish or perish and vocation (teaching and research) heading. In the first item, (n=48; 59.3%) of the respondents seem to feel that the phenomenon of publish or perish pressure detracts from their time and effort they devote to teaching. This is a solid proof that they neglect teaching for reasons of promotion, respect of colleagues at other universities, and the desire to leave a permanent mark after they retire. However, research detracting from both time and effort they devote to their students' supervision and administrative tasks seem to receive more or less the same frequency and percent (n=17; 21.3% and n=16; 19.8% respectively) and are less considered. In the second item, (n=38; 46.9%) of the respondents believe that because of the publish or perish culture, they favor publishing for they think teaching in a non-scholarly activity in contrast to research. This runs counter to what they have already stated as (n=48; 59.3%) of them previously mentioned with remorse that the phenomenon of publish or perish pressure detracts from their time and effort they devote to teaching. The second salient finding is the one where (n=32; 39.5%) of them claim that their universities hired them for their research abilities not for their teaching skills, which is not indeed shocking as most recruitment committees evaluate candidates based on what and how much they published and maybe the teaching experience comes last as they think it is a skill that could be learnt later in professional life whereas research skills are the most sought. The calamity is when they start teaching they begin suffering from the hurdles mentioned earlier particularly that (n=32; 39.5%) of them feel they can produce quality research rather than teach well. Thus, they admit being unable to teach and instead do research well when actually their vocation is to do both. Additionally, the last item did not receive much interest from our respondents as only (n=3; 3.7%) of them feel they can help their nationally universities get ranked internationally through what they produce as research. This is once more an inconsistent argument as it seems they are actually unable to produce what can indeed promote the academic picture of their universities. The conflictual picture of the teaching enterprise and the research activity is clearly obvious and the Moroccan academics are urged to combine both,

reconsider the first one because it is not done minimally, and revisit the second one because it is not done properly.

CONCLUSION

Although our academics show a great "selfconcern" by showing that they feel the heat of the pressures of publish or perish culture, which is characteristic of their personal managerial logic as they always aim at embellishing their picture and polishing their reputation outside their universities, they tend to forget or neglect the fact that in the past it was a matter of intellectual logic not a personal logic (Benningh off, 2011). The successful academic has to master the mechanisms of his/her career, be able to deal with the hurdles, get in a prior know of the sources, deal effectively with stress, burnout, and satisfaction aspects, and combat any perceived conflicts between the two polar aspects, teaching and doing research, that make up of an academic a good academic. The results presented in the present study show that the publish-or-perish culture can have both valuable and detrimental effects. Valuable in boosting the professional life of the researchers, their academic reputation, the respect they can get from their colleagues either at their departments, universities, or other universities, enhancing the visibility of their universities at the national and international scene in the research arena. Harmful in that the academics under the heat of this phenomenon lose ground as they cheat, cook data, and plagiarize and hence leave no room for professional development, kill any opportunity to be a beneficial element in promoting the image of one's university. Destructive also in the sense that a generation of students who are supposed to be future researchers become scapegoats of a process of unethical practices from people who are supposed to be good examples of researchers.

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