



Research Article

**A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF PUBLICATION
IN WEB OF SCIENCE AND SCOPUS-INDEXED JOURNALS
IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
AT VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITIES**

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the reality of scientific publication in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals in the humanities and social sciences of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education staff and students through the use of desk research. Overall, the university witnessed a rise in the number of publications from 2016 to 2021 and the active participation in this regard of some units and individuals, including its leaders. However, the number of articles in the humanities and social sciences is much lower than that in the natural sciences. Moreover, the articles do not cover a wide range of fields but primarily focus on education and psychology and they are authored by individuals from a few units in the university. Most of the articles are affiliated with educational institutions in the country while other forms of affiliation are still limited. The results of the study hope to provide reference information for the university leaders and relevant stakeholders as well as higher education institutions with similar situations in improving publication in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals in the humanities and social sciences.

Keywords: publication; Scopus; the humanities and social sciences; Vietnamese university; Web of Science

1. Introduction

The publication of research in scientific journals is a way to share research results with the public and through the exchange of ideas sciences have developed. In addition, research activities and publishing are significant and hold key positions in faculty work and professional identity (Prasojo et al., 2019). Where teaching has historically been seen as a central task in academia, research as well as publishing have changed to be much more

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integral to higher education institutions (Waghid, 2009). Of the journals selected by researchers to publish their studies, those in Web of Science (or ISI) and Scopus databases have long been of interest to researchers and universities. Publishing articles in these journals involves not only the sharing of knowledge, demonstrating the prestige of the researcher, but at a more macro level, it also contributes to good positions in the rankings of many institutions (Norhazwani & Zainab, 2007). Regarding publication and university ranking, Chou and Chan (2017) argue that countries that are supposed to view this tendency with great urgency are “often non-English-speaking emerging economies that have the potential to achieve these aims, have centralized education systems, have placed heavy emphasis on education historically, and have prioritized achieving national development by increasing global economic competitiveness” (p.65).

ISI stands for Institute for Scientific Information – the USA, founded in 1960 and in 1992 it was acquired by Thomson Scientific & Healthcare, known as Thomson ISI. It is now part of Thomson Reuters’ Intellectual Property & Science. In 2016, Intellectual Property & Science changed its name to Clarivate Analytics which manages Web of Science – an extensive database with more than 10,000 journals objectively selected and processed by experts to classify by fields. Currently Web of Science consists of Science Citation Index (SCI), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) and also Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) (University of Technology – Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, 2019). As for Scopus, it was built in November 2004 and is owned by Elsevier Publishing (the Netherlands). Compared to Web of Science, the number of journals located in Scopus is almost double. Despite this sheer volume, Scopus does not include all journals in Web of Science, but only contains about 70% of the number of Web of Science-indexed journals (Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology, 2019).

From the general fact that publication in international journals is of interest in academia, the study explores the situation of scientific publication in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (HCMUE) with a focus on the humanities and social sciences. The results of the study hope to provide reference information for the university leaders and relevant stakeholders as well as higher education institutions with similar situations in improving publication in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals in the humanities and social sciences.

2. Research design

2.1. A review of publishing in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals in the humanities and social sciences in Vietnam

In Vietnam, until the mid-2000s, thanks to the introduction of a number of Vietnamese researchers who had studied abroad, domestic scholars gradually became accustomed to global sources of scientific information from Western countries such as Web of Science or Scopus (Trinh et al., 2020). In addition, in the age of globalization, higher education

institutions are being invested more because they are on the front lines of educational innovation through their commitments to research and scientific activities (Nguyen, 2021). In legal terms, the 2012 Law on Higher Education requires lecturers at public universities to teach, conduct research and participate in professional development as well as demands that universities must have strategies and take action to enhance staff’s research capacity (National Assembly, 2012). Circular No. 47/2014/TT-BGDĐT issued on December 31, 2014 by the Ministry of Education and Training also stipulates the working regime of lecturers with emphasis on scientific research such as the regulations that lecturers must spend at least one-third of the total working time during the academic year on scientific research tasks and that every academic year lecturers must complete the assigned scientific research tasks corresponding to the current job title or position (Ministry of Education and Training, 2014). These elements have contributed to the expansion of the number of scientific articles in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals at Vietnamese universities (Nguyen et al., 2017).

By and large, articles in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals by Vietnamese authors (based on the addresses of authors’ affiliations) have increased, which can be seen from the list of authors commended by the Ministry of Education and Training for publishing articles in Web of Science-indexed journals. From 28 higher education institutions with 1,718 articles in 2018, the figure went up to 34 institutions with 3,627 articles two years later (Nguyen, 2021). The growth in publication can also be seen through statistics on papers in Scopus-indexed journals between 2000 and 2019, as provided in Figure 1 (Nguyen, 2021; Scimago, 2020). According to Nguyen Minh Quan et al. (2020), over the period of 2010-2018, the number of international publications of Vietnam rose steadily with an average of 20% annually.

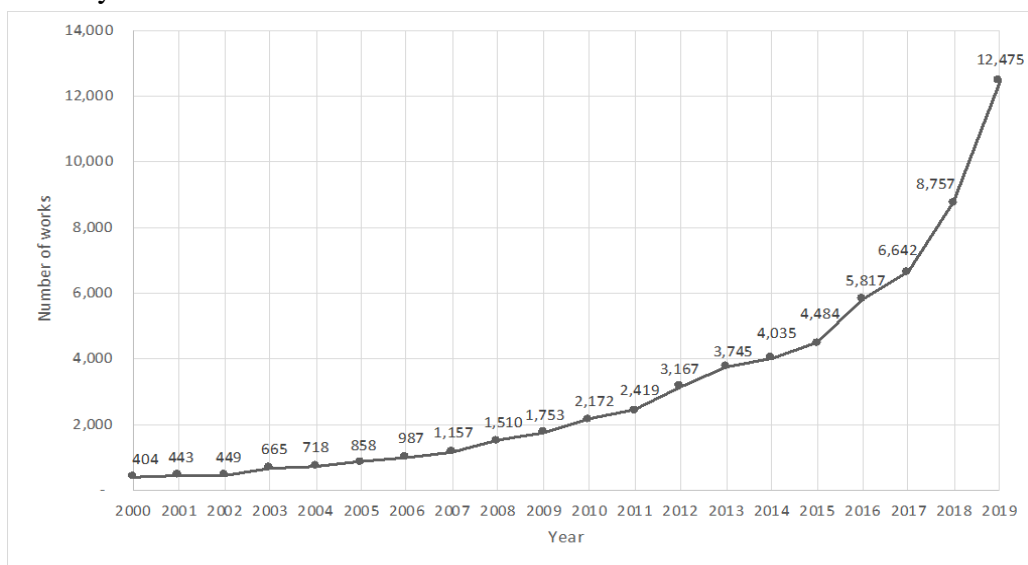


Figure 1. The number of publications by Vietnamese authors in the Scopus database during the 2000-2019 period

However, according to the Ministry of Education and Training (2014) and Nguyen Van Tuan et al. (2017), Vietnam's research results are still not commensurate with the size of Vietnamese higher education and also with the regulation that lecturers at public universities in Vietnam are expected to spend one-third of their working hours on scientific research. Apart from that, according to international standards, the performance of Vietnamese research is also generally limited. The Scopus database shows that the scientific publication performance gap between Vietnam and two nations in the region, Thailand and Malaysia, has been widening since 2001 (Nguyen, 2021). Vietnam's research performance in the humanities and social sciences is much weaker. According to Le Thi Kim Anh (2016), based on Scimago's dataset, between 1996 and 2015, only 345 of Vietnam's 29,238 peer-reviewed papers were produced by authors in the humanities and social sciences. This result is similar to what Vuong Quan Hoang and Tran Trung (2019) found based on Web of Science data. Accordingly, from 2008 to 2018, the number of publications of Vietnamese authors in the list of SCIE journals always outperformed that in the SSCI category.

When evaluating relatively and generally the quality of internationally published research works, Nguyen Minh Quan et al. (2020) use information about the citations of a study. Based on the group of 300 most highly cited works, publications in the natural sciences and the medical sciences are significantly higher than those in other fields. Meanwhile, papers in the humanities and social sciences are not highly cited, especially in the humanities. According to Nguyen Minh Quan et al. (2020), in terms of impact factor (IF), the majority of articles in the humanities and social sciences are published in journals with an IF of below 2.5. In addition, the proportion of Vietnamese authors on published articles is still low (for example, an article can be authored by 5 scholars with 1 Vietnamese person). Even in 2019 – the year with the highest proportion, this rate was only about 0.8 Vietnamese authors per article.

2.2. Methodology

The research aims to find out the reality of scientific publication in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals in the humanities and social sciences of individuals working and studying at HCMUE. The selection of this university is mainly related to the characteristics of the institution in terms of training fields. The university is one of the key public higher education institutions in the South of Vietnam with many departments offering programs in the humanities and social sciences with a long history of training. Therefore, it is suitable to choose this organization as a case study to explore research activities in the humanities and social sciences, specifically publication in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals. To be more specific, the university has 4 departments in the social science group, 6 foreign language departments and 8 departments providing programs in specific fields such as special education and primary education. The number of departments in the group of natural sciences includes 5 departments (HCMUE, 2022b).

To understand the situation of scientific publication at the university, this study used desk research. Specifically, the study reviewed statistics on articles authored by lecturers and students at HCMUE published in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals over the period of 2016 – 2021, which are available on the website of the university (HCMUE, 2022a). During the review, articles that were repeated in the lists compiled by the university were removed. After reviewing and “cleaning” the data, the study did statistical analyses according to different contents. The study also referred to other relevant research works in different contexts to compare and explain the practices at HCMUE.

3. Findings

3.1. The number of articles

According to the statistics provided by HCMUE on the number of staff and student articles published in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals from 2016 to 2021, it can be seen that the total number of articles increased steadily over the years. From 2016 with 22 articles, this number of articles went up more than 7 times to reach 163 in 2021. Regarding articles in the humanities and social sciences, the data also saw an incline over this period, from no articles in 2016 to 69 articles after 5 years. It is worth noting that compared to the other periods, the 2019-2020 period witnessed a sharp increase, from 7 articles to 29 articles just after a year. This dramatic incline within these two years can also be seen in the quantity of articles in the natural sciences with a rise of more than 40 articles. However, from 2020 to 2021, the quantity of articles in the social sciences and humanities decreased slightly compared to the previous periods. Details are shown in Figure 2.

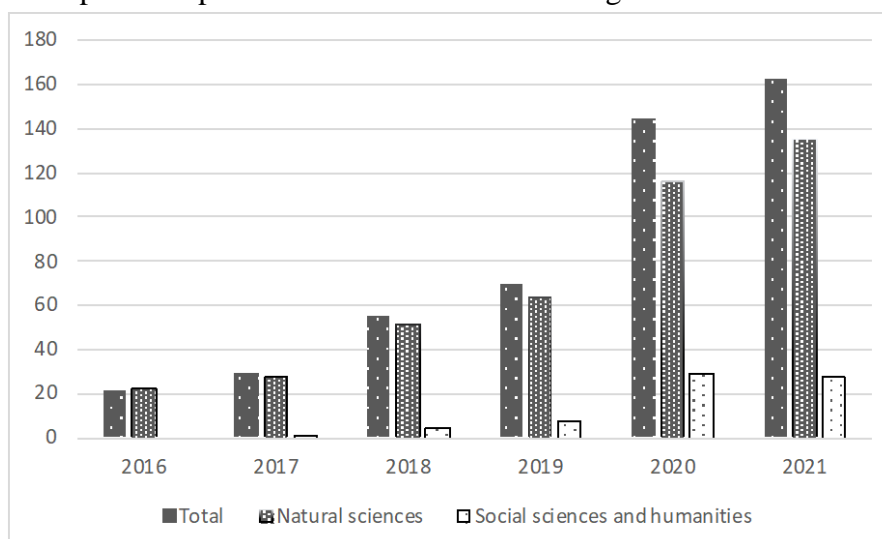


Figure 2. The number of articles of HCMUE in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals from 2016 to 2021

The situation that the total number of articles rose steadily over the years, including in the humanities and social sciences, is similar to the general tendency of articles with

Vietnamese affiliation addresses published in these kinds of journals as Nguyen Minh Quan et al. (2020), Nguyen Huu Cuong et al. (2020) and Nguyen Hoang Thien (2021) indicated.

Although experiencing a rise in general, the number of articles in the humanities and social sciences is much lower than that in the natural sciences, regardless of the fact that the number of departments in the humanities and social science group at HCMUE is more than that in the natural science one. Not to mention the fact that some faculty members in the natural science departments also published studies in the field of education. This situation is similar to what Le Thi Kim Anh (2016), Nguyen Minh Quan et al. (2020), and Vuong Quan Hoang and Tran Trung (2019) pointed out.

In the humanities and social sciences, when divided into specific fields, it can be seen that the majority of articles are in the fields of psychology and education. Only in 2021 did a small number of articles appear in other fields: 1 article in law and 2 articles in history. For the two fields of education and psychology, the number of articles increased over the 2016 – 2021 period. However, the figure for articles in the field of education dropped sharply from 27 in 2020 to 12 in the following year (almost half). In contrast, psychology articles nearly doubled from 6 to 13 during these two years. Details are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. *The number of articles of HCMUE in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals from 2017 to 2021 according to fields in the humanities and social sciences*

Fields	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Education	1	3	2	27	12	45
Psychology	-	1	5	6	13	25
Law	-	-	-	-	1	1
History	-	-	-	-	2	2

*As for the 2020 data, 4 articles were categorized by authors and the university into two fields: psychology and education. This research respects and upholds this classification. Therefore, 4 articles in the field of education are also listed in the field of psychology.

The fact that most articles mainly focus on education and psychology may relate to the reality that the university is one of the key institutions in Vietnam in terms of teacher education with a long history of formation and development, which has substantially contributed to its strengths in education and psychology (focusing on educational psychology). Nonetheless, given both the quality and quantity of lecturers in other fields such as geography and literature, the university's potential and ability to have research published in a wide range of domains is considerable.

3.2. *The departments and offices with individuals as authors of articles*

The number of units (departments and offices) at HCMUE with staff or students authoring articles in the humanities and social sciences is calculated according to the name of the unit. Particularly, if an article is co-authored by 2 or more lecturers belonging to the same unit, it still counts as 1 unit with an article; and if an article is co-authored by 2 lecturers from two different units of the university, each unit is considered having a staff member or

student being the author of that article. Similar to university leaders, which are already counted separately as a unit, if there are two university leaders co-authoring an article, it is counted as 1 unit for an article. The determination of which individual belongs to which unit is based on the information provided in the article.

Statistical figures show that only 11 units have individuals authoring articles in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals between 2016 and 2021 in the humanities and social sciences (Table 2). Units including the Department of Mathematics, the Department of English, the Experimental High School, the Department of Physical Education and the Office of Science, Technology and Environmental Studies-Journal of Science have a number of individuals contributing to the articles but their participation is not continuous over the years. Besides, individuals from the Department of Biology, the Office of Academic Inspection and the Department of History only started having papers published in 2021. The Department of Psychology, the Department of Educational Sciences and the Institute for Educational Research are units whose individuals had articles published continuously over a number of years. They are also top units which have the highest number of papers – 43, 10 and 6 respectively. It is worth noting that university leaders are also individuals making considerable and continuous contributions to the number of articles, with a total of 21 articles between 2018 and 2021.

Table 2. *The number of articles of HCMUE in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals from 2017 to 2021 in the humanities and social sciences according to the units in the university*

Units	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
University leaders	-	1	4	12	4	21
Department of Mathematics	1	-	-	2	-	2
Department of Psychology		2	4	21	15	43
Department of English	-	2	-	-	1	3
Department of Educational Sciences	-	-	1	4	5	10
Institute for Educational Research	-	-	1	3	2	6
Experimental High School	-	-	1	-	-	1
Office of Science, Technology and Environmental Studies-Journal	-	-	-	3	-	3

Units	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
of Science						
Department						
Of Physical						
Education	-	-	-	2	-	2
Department of						
Biology	-	-	-	-	1	1
Office of						
Academic	-	-	-	-	1	1
Inspection						
Department of						
History	-	-	-	-	2	2

The distribution of individuals as paper authors among the 11 units is uneven – as many as 7 out of 11 units have individuals authoring only 1 to 3 articles. Due to the fact that most articles are mainly from lecturers and students of the Department of Psychology, when these individuals switched to focusing on the field of psychology instead of conducting a large amount of research on education as previous, the number of articles in the field of education dropped sharply from 27 in 2020 to 12 articles a year later. In contrast, psychology articles nearly doubled from 6 to 14 during this time. Apart from that, the publication of individuals in some of these 11 units had disruptions (5 units) and some units just began to contribute to international publication in 2021.

3.3. Authorship and affiliation

Generally the articles are co-authored. The number of articles written by 1 author is 8 while the number of articles written by 2 or more is 61. Among co-authored articles, the number of articles with 4 authors is the highest (16 articles), followed by 5 authors (5 articles) and 3 authors (11 articles). This information shows that collaboration in publishing scientific papers by the university staff and students is popular and the data may also reveal that the majority of accepted papers are co-authored. Detailed information is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The number of articles of HCMUE in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals from 2017 to 2021 according to the number of authors per article

The number of authors per article	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
1	1	-	2	1	4	8
2	-	-	2	8	4	14
3	-	4	-	3	4	11
4	-	-	2	8	6	16
5	-	-	1	8	4	13
More than 5	-	-	-	1	6	7

Another characteristic associated with the authorship of the articles is that the large number of articles is written by several individuals who have also made continuous and considerable contributions to international publication over the years. Specifically, the most “productive” author published 25 articles. The numbers of articles from the second and the third “productive” ones are 24 and 13 accordingly. These individuals also come from the units with the highest quantity of articles: university leaders and the Department of Psychology. Meanwhile, many individuals only wrote 1 or 2 articles during the 2016 – 2021 period and there were disruptions in publication.

Affiliation (collaborations between two or more authors) in this research is divided into 3 types: with units within the university, with other organizations in Vietnam and with foreign organizations (Table 4). University leaders are still segregated into one unit. If an article has 2 types of affiliation, it is classified into 2 corresponding ones and this is similar to an article with 3 types of affiliation. Most of the articles are the products of collaborations with individuals from organizations in Vietnam outside HCMUE such as with Can Tho University, Dong Nai University, University of Finance - Marketing, Thu Dau Mot University, Hue University and Saigon University. The second most popular type of affiliation is the collaboration with authors from different units in the university (23 papers). However, one thing to note is that collaboration with authors within the university has not yet expanded, but is mainly found among university leaders, the Department of Psychology, the Department of Educational Sciences, the Department of Physical Education, the Department of Biology and the Office of Science, Technology and Environmental Studies-Journal of Science. The least popular type of affiliation is collaboration with members from other countries and areas such as Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Indonesia, Australia, the United States, the Netherlands and Japan (9 articles).

Table 4. *The number of articles of HCMUE in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals from 2017 to 2021 according to types of affiliation*

The types of affiliation	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
With units within the university	-	-	1	3	2	23
With organizations in Vietnam	1	3	1	18	18	41
With organizations in other countries	-	1	1	3	4	9

3.4. *The types of journals*

In general, the staff and students of HCMUE have articles published in different types of journals. The largest number can be found in ESCI journals with 29 articles, almost double

that in the 2nd one (Q4) with 11 articles (Table 5). With regards to IF, about two-thirds of articles were published in journals with no IF and IF of lower than 1.5. This is similar to what Nguyen Minh Quan et al. (2020) revealed when examining research in the social sciences and humanities of Vietnamese authors.

Table 5. *The number of articles of HCMUE in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals from 2017 to 2021 according to types of journals*

The types of journals	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
ESCI	-	-	4	10	15	29
Q4	-	-	-	8	3	11
Q4 – ESCI	1	-	-	-	-	1
Q3	-	2	1	5	1	9
Q3 – ESCI	-	1	-	-	-	1
Q2	-	-	1	2	2	5
Q2 – ESCI	-	1	-	-	3	4
Q2 – SSCI	-	-	1	-	1	2
Q1	-	-	-	3	-	3
Q1 – SSCI	-	-	-	1	1	2
Q1 – SCIE/SSCI	-	-	-	-	2	2

3.5. Subfields

The research also tried to find out which subfields received the most research. The categorization is only relative because an article can fall under different subfields. The principle of assigning an article to a certain subfield is based on the content of the article which can be partly read through abstracts as well as keywords.

Since education is a field with the largest number of articles, there may be many different subfields; hence the article used 19 subfields provided by Nguyen Huu Cuong et al. (2020) in a review study of education articles written by Vietnamese authors in Scopus-indexed journals from 2009 to 2018. At the same time this research introduced new subfields absent in Nguyen Huu Cuong et al. (2020)'s work, including mathematics, natural science and STEM education, life skills education and culture of higher education. As for psychology, its subfields include educational psychology, health psychology and business psychology. The field of history includes world history and international relations whereas law includes commercial law.

The study results show that the subfields with the most research are educational psychology (18 papers), general education (9 papers), educational management (6 papers), student learning outcomes (5 papers) and health psychology (5 papers). Most of the other subfields include only 1 article (Table 6).

Table 6. The number of articles of Ho Chi Minh City University of in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals from 2017 to 2021 according to subfields in the humanities and social sciences

Fields and subfields	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Education						
Assessment and evaluation	-	-	-	-	1	1
Cross culture studies	-	-	-	1	-	1
Cross-border education	-	-	-	1	-	1
Culture of higher education	-	-	-	1	1	2
Curriculum development	-	-	-	1	-	1
Educational management	-	-	-	6	-	6
English language teaching	-	2	-	-	-	2
Gender and women's studies	-	-	1	-	-	1
General education	-	1	-	5	3	9
Life skills education	-	-	-	1	-	1
Mathematics, natural science and STEM education	1	-	-	2	1	4
Online and blended learning	-	-	-	1	-	1
Pedagogy	-	-	-	1	-	1
Preschool education	-	-	-	1	1	2
Professional development	-	-	-	1	-	1
Quality assurance and accreditation	-	-	1	1	1	3
Research methods in education	-	-	-	-	1	1
Student learning outcomes	-	-	-	3	2	5
Psychology						
Business psychology	-	-	-	-	1	1
Educational psychology	-	1	4	6	7	18
Health psychology	-	-	-	-	5	5
Miscellaneous	-	-	1	1	1	3
History						
International relations	-	-	-	-	1	1
World history	-	-	-	-	1	1
Law						
Business law	-	-	-	-	1	1

Concerning subfields researched by HCMUE staff and students, it is obvious that most articles focus on a few subfields such as educational psychology, general education and educational management. A number of subfields related to the peculiarities of some departments, such as special education and physical education, are lacking.

4. Conclusion

Generally, publication in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals of HCMUE from 2016 to 2021 witnessed an increase in number including in the humanities and social sciences. The university has many key research units devoting themselves to international publication and especially its leaders also actively contribute to this domain. However, there

are still several aspects that need to be improved for the enhancement of international publication. The university needs to understand the reasons for the increase in articles especially between 2019 and 2020 so that it can continue to exploit them for boosting the research productivity of its faculty and students. Units with a large number of individuals contributing to international publication and individuals active in this activity should be given opportunities to share experiences, cooperate with and support other units and individuals in this regard with the mechanism put in place by the university. In addition, the university and relevant stakeholders should also find out the reasons for the decrease in the number of articles in the humanities and social sciences from 2020 to 2021, the small number or absence of scientific papers in a variety of fields and subfields, and the noninvolvement of a number of units/individuals in publication. As for affiliation, while collaboration with domestic organizations are quite popular, further encouragement and facilitation for internal collaboration as well as international collaboration are still in need of. Given the fact that the majority of research is in the ESCI and Q4 categories, the university, depending on its development strategy and interests, can provide the journal list in which its staff and students are expected to have research published as well as the support and incentives that come with it. These are also suggestions for universities with similar situations in developing their research activities, especially in terms of publication in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals.

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PHÂN TÍCH THỐNG KÊ VỀ VIỆC CÔNG BỐ KHOA HỌC TRÊN TẠP CHÍ THUỘC DANH MỤC WEB OF SCIENCE VÀ SCOPUS TRONG LĨNH VỰC KHOA HỌC XÃ HỘI VÀ NHÂN VĂN TẠI CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC VIỆT NAM

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TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu tìm hiểu thực tế về công bố khoa học trên các tạp chí thuộc Web of Science và Scopus trong lĩnh vực khoa học xã hội và nhân văn của Trường Đại học Sư phạm Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh thông qua việc sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu tài liệu. Nhìn chung, Trường đã có sự gia tăng về số lượng công bố từ năm 2016 đến năm 2021 và sự tham gia tích cực vào lĩnh vực này của một số đơn vị và cá nhân, trong đó có lãnh đạo của Trường. Tuy nhiên, số lượng bài báo trong lĩnh vực khoa học xã hội và nhân văn còn thấp hơn nhiều so với trong lĩnh vực khoa học tự nhiên. Hơn nữa, các bài báo không đề cập nhiều lĩnh vực mà chủ yếu tập trung vào giáo dục, tâm lý và do một số lượng nhỏ những cá nhân đến từ một số đơn vị trong trường đại học thực hiện. Hầu hết các bài báo đều liên kết với các cơ sở giáo dục trong nước trong khi các hình thức liên kết khác còn nhiều hạn chế. Kết quả của nghiên cứu hi vọng sẽ cung cấp thông tin tham khảo cho lãnh đạo nhà trường và các bên liên quan cũng như các cơ sở giáo dục đại học có thực trạng tương tự trong việc cải thiện việc công bố khoa học trên các tạp chí thuộc Web of Science và Scopus trong lĩnh vực khoa học xã hội và nhân văn.

Từ khóa: công bố; Scopus; khoa học xã hội và nhân văn; đại học Việt Nam; Web of Science