

PUBLISHING ARTICLES IN THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE ANALYTIC HIERARCHY PROCESS

Enrique Mu
IJAHP Editor-in Chief
Carlow University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Email: emu@carlow.edu

ESSAY

The IJAHP receives contributions from all over the world. Although the diversity of applications, approaches and world paradigms is one of the strengths of this journal, it can also create problems in terms of authors' approaches and expectations. The goal of this essay is to present a set of criteria that the editorial board applies to submitted articles, and recommendations for authors on how to get their submissions published. We believe these suggestions will be useful not only for articles submitted to this journal, but for AHP/ANP related research papers submitted to other international publication outlets.

The IJAHP's mission is to advance the use, development and education of decision making using the Analytic Hierarchy/Network process at all levels worldwide. This mission is broad enough to encompass both articles dealing with theoretical issues as well as those concerned with practical applications. We would like to outline the criteria that the editors use to decide if an article is suitable for the journal and eligible to be sent on for full review. Notice that this means we follow a pre-screening process, even prior to forwarding the papers to the journal reviewers.

General Criteria for Potential Publications

The first general criterion that the editors consider when a paper is submitted for publication is whether or not the theme of the article fits with the mission of the IJAHP. As previously mentioned, this journal focuses on the use, development, and education of decision making using AHP/ANP. Therefore, any papers submitted should be aligned with this mission. We will not accept submissions whose focus is on the use of different multi-criteria decision-making methods and AHP/ANP is mentioned merely as an afterthought. Furthermore, we will not accept submissions that deal only with methodologies such as data mining and AHP/ANP are not mentioned.

The second criterion that editors consider is the scholarship of the problem addressed in the paper. If the paper discusses a theoretical AHP/ANP problem, the editors would like

to know first, why this problem is important; second, what the problem itself is; and finally, what the paper's contribution to addressing this problem will be. Unfortunately, many authors begin their articles indicating that they are going to compare method X with AHP/ANP. They then compare the methods (e.g. by addressing the same problem from both perspectives), and conclude that both methodologies provide similar results (e.g. by using Saaty's comparison index). In these situations the editors would like to know why method X was chosen for the comparison. Is there a long standing discussion in the theoretical or practitioner literature about this method and AHP/ANP? Does method X provide nuances that AHP/ANP does not? Merely concluding that both methods provide similar results is not enough. The next logical questions should be: Why do both methods produce similar results? When may they not produce similar results? If the results are similar, when should method X be used and when should AHP/ANP be used?

Practical applications are subject to similar considerations. How important is the problem at hand? Granted, a problem may be very important for a certain group of people, and relatively unimportant for others. Since IJAHP is read worldwide by a large number of scholars and practitioners, the editors look for the global relevance of the problem at hand. Sometimes, the practitioner's problem may be local or specialized in nature, but the implications of the solution may have far reaching importance. The originality of the problem is important since novel problems have had little prior analysis. For example, it is unlikely that an article about buying a car or selecting a place to go on vacation would be published in this journal, unless, the methodology would offer a new perspective about how to perform this type of AHP/ANP analysis.

The third criterion considered by the editors is methodology. The most important part of using AHP/ANP is the development of the model to address the specific decision. For this reason, knowing how the model was created is important because it allows the reader to assess its validity. While the editors could certainly build an AHP/ANP model about how to address our current economic problems, this model would certainly be of little help in comparison to that developed by a group of economic experts. For this reason, the participants involved in building the model, their qualifications, the way their different views were addressed and their judgments combined, and the factors that were hotly debated, etc. constitute critical information to include in the paper so the reader can assess the validity of the model. Many authors provide no information about these aspects of model construction, and often do not provide even a cursory literature review. Statements like, "Upon careful discussion of the problem and relevant literature review, the following hierarchy was obtained..." are not sufficient. Many submissions have larger sections dedicated to the discussion of how AHP/ANP operates, something that is well-documented everywhere than to the discussion of how the model was created, something that is totally unknown to their readers.

The fourth criterion for consideration by the editors is the content that is included in writing about an AHP/ANP study and the reporting of the results. Although there are not defined standards about AHP/ANP reporting (and discussion of this topic alone could

require a full article), some best practices have been established. For example, for AHP, it is important to show the hierarchy and define/explain each of its elements including samples of the various types of pairwise comparison matrices, along with their consistency indices. Similarly, sensitivity analysis and its implications should be thoroughly investigated and discussed. Potential authors are encouraged to review published articles in the IJAHP and similar journals to become familiar with other best practices. In general, authors should review the reporting requirements, based on published articles, of their target journals.

The final criterion that the editors consider is the quality of the writing. The article must be pleasant to read and easy – or at least possible – for an educated reader familiar with the AHP to understand. Writing in a foreign language is always a challenge, and the IJAHP editors are sensitive to this. We go the extra mile to understand the gist of the article before sending it for full review, and to copyedit accepted articles to make them as clear as possible for our readers. However, it is the author's responsibility to provide an understandable manuscript to begin the process. We certainly recommend that potential authors for whom English is not their first language use the services of colleagues and free lancers to help copyedit their articles for readability prior to submission. Finally, a Style Guide is provided to demonstrate expected formatting and other requirements. Authors that submit papers that do not follow the journal submission guidelines create the impression of sloppiness, which casts an undesirable and perhaps undeserved shadow on the reliability and quality of the submitted article. So please be sure to read and follow the Style Guide for papers.

In Summary

The goal of this article has been to provide potential authors with the general criteria followed by the IJAHP editors when deciding if an article is deemed potentially suitable for the journal and should therefore be sent for full review by peer evaluation. These general criteria are: 1) topic fit with the IJAHP aims, 2) scholarship or clarity and relevance of the research problem, 3) sound methodology, 4) content or sensible reporting, and 5) clarity of writing. We believe that these general criteria are useful for publication not only in IJAHP but in any other journal dedicated to our field. This article is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion about recommendations for acceptable IJAHP submissions; other aspects of this topic will be discussed in future issues.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.13033/ijahp.v4i2.159>