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SHORT REPORT

Survey exploring the opinion of corresponding authors of articles published in the South Eastern European Journal of Public Health during 2014-2021

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Abstract

The aim of this survey was to assess the intentions of corresponding authors for publishing again in the South Eastern European Journal of Public Health (SEEJPH), the aspects that they like most about the journal, and things which can be improved by SEEJPH in order to be more attractive to potential contributors. A three-item questionnaire was sent out by email to all corresponding authors (N=89) who published in the 16 volumes of the SEEJPH journal between 2014 and 2021. Among 84 eligible corresponding authors, we collected 26 answers, or 31%. There were generally favourable and constructive comments, which is encouraging. The wide array of countries of the corresponding authors represents the successful global orientation of SEEJPH. Also, more than half of all related articles are classified as original papers, and the average of four authors per represented paper is satisfying. Furthermore, all corresponding authors would publish again in SEEJPH (“definitely”, or “probably”), and their numbers are almost equally distributed throughout 2014-2021.

Keywords: *author survey, corresponding author, scientific journal, South Eastern European Journal of Public Health (SEEJPH).*

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Introduction

In the past few years, there is evidence of an intensive proliferation and competition of many online scientific journals including also health sciences (1). Hence, perceptions and practices of researchers regarding the current state of play and the future of scholarly publishing is important to be assessed and is actually subject to ongoing research (2).

In 2014, the first volume of a new open access journal was published by Jacobs Company (3). The South Eastern European Journal of Public Health (SEEJPH) is an open access international peer-reviewed journal involving all areas of the health sciences and public health (4). SEEJPH welcomes submissions of scientists, researchers, and practitioners from all over the world, but particularly pertinent to transition countries (4).

After six years of release of the journal, we aimed at exploring the opinions of all corresponding authors of the articles published in SEEJPH. More specifically, we aimed at assessing the intentions of corresponding authors for publishing again in SEEJPH, the aspects that they liked most about the journal, and things which can be improved by the journal in order to be more attractive to potential contributors.

Methods

A three-item questionnaire was sent out by email twice (in February and April 2021) to all corresponding authors (N=89) who published in the 16 volumes of the SEEJPH journal between 2014 and 2021.

Two emails of corresponding authors turned out to be not functional, whereas one of the corresponding authors was deceased. In addition, two other corresponding authors (co-authors of this short report) were excluded from the current analysis.

Overall, among 84 eligible corresponding authors, we collected 26 answers, or 31% (the complete Excel database is annexed).

Results

Addressees responded from the following countries: Albania, Croatia, England, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Kosovo, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Sweden. Out of the represented publications, 14 studies (53.8%) were classified as original articles. The other 12 papers are distributed between reviews (n=3), reports (n=4), case studies (n=2), commentaries (n=1), and editorials (n=2).

Altogether, 104 scientists co-authored these papers, i.e. on average 4 authors per publication. The 26 corresponding authors participated during the period 2014-2021 in 10 additional articles, a total of 36 papers distributed over the years almost evenly with 6 publications in 2017, 2019, and 2020, and a minimum of 3 in 2015 and 2 in 2021 (only the first volume of the two planned in 2021).

We addressed the corresponding authors per email as follows:

“You have published in the South Eastern European Journal of Public Health (SEEJPH) as the corresponding author. To develop the journal, we would like to ask you three short questions about your experience with SEEJPH (please send your short answers as a reply to this email to kreshnikp@gmail.com):”

Question 1: Would you publish again in SEEJPH? (a. definitely, b. probably, c. unlikely, d. no)

Regarding the answers: 22 or 84.6% of the corresponding authors answered “definitely” and 4 authors answered “probably”.



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Question 2: What did you like about SEEJPH (free wording)?

Answers (the favorable core terms underlined and listed in alphabetical order) include: open access; coverage of Balkan (2 times); public health content; reasonable cost; format; innovative (new ideas); excellent organization; orientation; fast and helpful peer-review (19 times); global perspective; good quality; global readership; serious and correct; supportive; registered in SCOPUS.

Question 3: What should be improved in SEEJPH (free wording)?

Answers (core terms underlined and listed in alphabetical order) include: technical improvement of layout (2 times), copyediting (1 time), and website (4 times); ORCID numbers; inform mainstream providers and provide volumes free of charge e.g. to Elsevier, Academic Search Ultimate, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, ProQuest etc.; register with PubMed/Medline; link to services (Public health, medicine, health promotion, Ministries of Health); use of social media; more special volumes; more volumes per year.

Discussion

The generally favorable and constructive comments are encouraging. The wide array of countries of the corresponding authors represents the successful global orientation of SEEJPH. Also, more than half of all related articles are classified as original papers, and the average of four authors per represented paper is satisfying given the widespread misuse of co-authorships (5). Furthermore, all corresponding authors would publish again in SEEJPH, definitely or probably, and their numbers are almost equally distributed throughout the years 2014-2021. Most importantly, quality, organization, and fast

peer-review are perceived as very positive, especially the fast and supportive peer review at the top with 19 out of 26 possible judgments (only one author perceived a delayed peer-review process).

Even more critical, and the primary purpose of the survey, are the suggestions for possible improvements: proactive information of mainstream providers, intensified use of social media, more publications per year (three or four - partly special - volumes per year), linkage to ORCID, and improvement of the website layout and copyediting (together, seven times, or 26.9%).

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Annex. Detailed answers of all corresponding authors who participated in the survey (Excel database)

The excel file is attached to this PDF.