

The psychology publication situation in Cyprus

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Abstract

The aim of the present paper was to review the psychological publication situation in Cyprus. Psychology is a very young field of study in Cyprus, whereas research and publishing are more recent additions. It seems that only within the past decade with the advent of academic institutions hiring academic psychologists has psychological research and publishing become a priority. In order to explore questions of interest relevant to publication issues, a questionnaire was developed by the author and was distributed to psychologists in all accredited tertiary educational institutions in Cyprus. Although the publication world of Cyprus is limited in number, based on the responses provided, it appears that Cypriot academic psychologists are active in the publication world and do not currently face many problems. At this time Cyprus does not have its own psychological journal and it does not appear that it is in the process of creating such a journal. Therefore the idea of a European publication platform may be more of a reality and may even address some of the current needs and future difficulties that Cypriot psychologists may face in their attempts at publishing their work

Key words: psychology; scientific communication; information dissemination; online publishing; journals; trends; Cyprus

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History of Psychology and Research in Cyprus

Even though psychology is considered to be a relatively young field around the world, in Cyprus psychology is in its infancy. It was not until the early 1970s that the first individuals who studied psychology abroad returned and introduced this field to the island of Cyprus (Tziongouros, 2007). Also, until very recently (1991), there was no post-secondary education in Cyprus. The first accredited post-secondary education programs arose following the birth of the first public university, the University of Cyprus in 1991 and the first department of psychology was founded in 2004. Even today, there are only three accredited Bachelor degrees in Psychology (one from a public institution and two from private institutions), two accredited Masters level degrees in school psychology and developmental, educational and cognitive psychology, and one Ph.D. degree in developmental, educational and cognitive psychology (from the University of Cyprus). There are a couple of additional programs at some of the private institutions, however they have not yet received accreditation. As a result many individuals interested in studying beyond the high-school level had to be educated abroad and many still are.

As expected, the psychological research arena is also in its infancy in Cyprus. Most individuals in psychology who conduct research and publish their work tend to be affiliated with tertiary education academic institutions. Moreover, Cyprus until recently did not have an established mechanism for funding research. The Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation (RPF) was established in 1996 after an initiative from the government of the Republic of Cyprus (2008). The general goal of this foundation is to promote the development of scientific and technological research in Cyprus. In its latest call for research grants (May 2008), the RPF plans to grant a total of 160 million Euros, bringing the Cyprus Gross Domestic Product for research to 0.6%. This is a twofold increase since 2006. Despite the increase in research and development expenditure in recent years, the share of the GDP devoted to research still remains low compared to other countries (Cyprus Statistical Service, 2006). It is unknown though, how much of this money has gone to fund psychological type research.

Publications in Psychology

Around the world, journals are usually published by various psychological organizations or tertiary education institutions. In Cyprus, the main recognized psychology association, namely the Cyprus Psychologists Association (CYPSA) does not have any regular publications or newsletters where research findings or other psychological papers are published. Following an extensive search by the author in all tertiary education institutions and main libraries across the island of Cyprus, some publications were detected relevant to sibling areas of psychology. For example, The University of Nicosia publishes "The Cyprus Review: A Journal of Social, Economic, & Political Issues." The Cyprus Review is a bi-annual refereed journal, being published since 1989 in the English language. Although the journal deals with social science relevant issues it has not yet published a purely psychological article.

Accessibility to International, European and Other Journals

All major Universities in Cyprus, whether public or private, have their own libraries. After an exploration by the author, it was identified that all libraries subscribe to numerous journals in the field of psychology. Additionally, all libraries have links to other academic libraries abroad and offer the possibility of interlibrary loan for journal articles. Regarding psychological databases, the author identified that the University of Cyprus offers the database PsycARTICLES of the American Psychological Association along with some additional databases where psychological articles may be listed (e.g. SCOPUS, CITATION INDEX, and GALE GROUP- expanded Academic ASAP). The University of Nicosia recently started subscribing to PsycINFO of the American Psychological Association which offers numerous full text articles making international psychological research more accessible.

Views of Psychologists in Cyprus on Accessibility and Publication Issues

In order to investigate questions of interest relevant to publication issues (such as where do Cypriot psychologists publish etc), a questionnaire was developed by the author and was distributed to psychologists in all accredited tertiary educational institutions in Cyprus. It is important to note that the number of individuals comprising this population is relatively small (approximately 25 academics). Most of this population is comprised of early career psychologists. A total of nine individuals (four females) responded to the questionnaire within the time limit specified, and so the following results are based on this sample.

Five individuals classified themselves as early in their career, three as mid-career and one as late career. The areas of specialization were various ranging from clinical psychology, to cognitive and experimental psychology, educational psychology, developmental psychology, and clinical health psychology. The majority of individuals (N=5) stated that they serve on editorial boards of journals. Of those who serve on editorial boards, one person serves on a Greek journal editorial board, three serve on European and three serve on International editorial boards (some serve on both European and International). Regarding whether they have a preference of journals in which they publish in, all said yes. Reasons for journal preference included relevance to field of research and study and the reputation of the journal.

Participants were also asked to specify whether they published in any local journals (including Greek journals) during the past year. Only three individuals had published something in a Greek journal. Four participants had published in European journals and eight had published in International journals. Criteria presented for choosing a journal in which to submit a manuscript included: impact factor, reputation of journal (renowned), topic specificity, whether others in their same field of study publish in that journal, and the readership of the journal. Participants were also asked about the evaluation criteria for career progression and the type of publications emphasized. All participants agreed that there is an emphasis on the journal reputation and the impact factor of the journal. Four participants noted that there is an additional emphasis on publications being indexed in international bibliographical databases. No individuals expressed an emphasis on having publications in their native Greek language or to more local journals.

The next series of questions dealt with problems that Cypriot psychologists may have faced in their publication attempts. Only two individuals stated that they had manuscripts rejected for publication due to lack of universal value of the Cypriot sample used in their study. Additionally, only two individuals presented that they had a manuscript rejected for publication due to English language problems. The rest of the sample presented that they did not face such problems.

Next, participants were asked whether they thought it would be a good idea for the psychology research community in Cyprus to establish its own local journal. Only two participants thought that this would be a good idea, whereas the rest expressed that there is no need for a local journal. Both of the participants who answered that they think it would be a good idea to have a Cypriot local psychological journal, stated that if a local journal developed it should publish in both the Greek and English languages.

Additionally, participants were asked whether they saw a need for a publication platform tailored to European needs. The majority of participants (N=6) agreed that there is a need for such a platform. Regarding whether the participant's perceived the European linguistic diversity as an obstacle for scientific communication in psychology, the majority of participants answered that they do not see it as a problem. Finally, participants were asked to offer suggestions regarding the creation of a European psychology publication platform and any needs that they may have that they would like this platform to address. Some suggestions included: a) that Europeans should pose questions regarding the preparedness of European trained Ph.D. students in research writing and publication and whether students who graduate are ready to start publishing; b) that the platform should be "inclusive, encouraging the exchange and integration of ideas, research and training in psychology throughout Europe and must be open to submission from outside Europe too, especially North America and Japan;" c) European research should stress quality of research and methodology so as to be of high quality that could be publishable internationally; and d) that European efforts should be conducted in a common language such as English and "be open for publication and input equality from all European countries including small countries such as Cyprus." Additionally, several individuals expressed that there already exist numerous quality European journals with high impact factors and that if a person's work is of quality then it will find a home. Another thought presented was that as European researchers conduct quality and innovative research, they will gain reputation, be more publishable, will be asked more frequently to serve on editorial boards, and have more influence on what becomes published.

Discussion

The aim of the present paper was to review the psychological publication situation in Cyprus. Psychology is a very young field of study in Cyprus, whereas research and publishing are more recent additions. It seems that only within the past decade with the advent of academic institutions hiring academic psychologists has psychological research and publishing become a priority. Given the lack of Ph.D. level education, until very recently in Cyprus, the majority of individuals interested in receiving post graduate education study abroad (mainly in English speaking countries such as the United States and United Kingdom) and as such learn how to conduct research and publish via their training

institutions. This may place Cypriot researchers at an advantage given that they learn how to author publications in English, a language that is usually preferred in the “publication world” of psychology, and also learn how to conduct research that would be publishable in International and European journals. Therefore, Cypriot researchers do not appear to have major difficulties in publishing their research, although at times the uniqueness (specificity) of the Cypriot sample may create some problems for publication in highly reputable and high impact journals.

Regarding accessibility of journals, Cypriot psychologists do not appear to have a major problem given that all major academic institutions offer library services that aid their staff in finding the articles they need. There does appear to exist a bias towards accessing English language databases, however Cypriot psychologists do not appear to have a great need currently for accessing other types of databases. Given that the libraries of the various academic institutions offer the services free of charge to their academics, psychologists have a relatively easy and affordable access to journal articles. However, psychology students conducting research as a requirement of their programs have complained in the past about the cost of interlibrary loans or of purchasing certain articles their professors may not have been able to procure for them. As more psychologists engage in research, even ones that do not work within the academic arena, problems of accessibility and cost associated with subscription rates may develop in Cyprus, thus making solutions such as open-access journals more favored at least within this community of researchers.

Cypriot psychologists appear to prefer to publish in International or European journals and few opt on occasion to publish in some Greek journals (e.g. *Psychology: The Journal of the Hellenic Psychological Society* or *Hellenic Journal of Psychology*). Most of the publications of Cypriot psychologists are in the English language and very few are in the Greek language (when they are published in some of the Greek journals, although the Greek journals tend to accept manuscripts in the English language as well). The exact numbers of publications and where Cypriot psychologists publish are not known.

To conclude, the Cyprus psychological community does not have its own journal. This might be comprehensible given again the young age of research and psychology in Cyprus. Currently, most surveyed Cypriot psychologists do not yet see a need for a local journal. It is this author’s belief that numerous factors may contribute to this direction of responding by the participants, including concerns about how reputable such a journal would be, the costs associated with publishing and who would publish this journal, the language of the journal (if it is in the native Greek language it limits the audience of the journal and as such it would have a smaller impact), and who will serve as reviewers for the articles to be published. Regarding this last point it is important to emphasize again the limited number of academic and research oriented psychologists in Cyprus which creates the problem of whether the same people who publish would be the same ones as those reviewing the articles for publication, thus creating an inherent bias. Also, another related concern is the requirements for career progression placed on academic psychologists, where impact factor and reputation of journal in which they publish in, are key factors. If a local journal were to develop, academic psychologists in Cyprus would find it difficult in terms of their career aspirations to submit their manuscripts to a newly founded journal with no established reputation. Additionally, for a journal to establish its impact it needs to have a broad readership, and Cypriot psychologists appear concerned that it is not easy for a local journal to achieve the necessary audience. At this time it does not appear that Cyprus is in the process of creating

its own psychological journal. Therefore the idea of a European publication platform may be more of a reality and may even address some of the current needs and future difficulties that Cypriot psychologists may face in their attempts at publishing their work.

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