

Improving the Quality of Vietnamese Academic Journals on Social Sciences and Humanities: A Commentary on Current Status and Pathways to Internationalization

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Abstract: This study examines the present status and strategies to improve the quality of Vietnamese academic publications in the fields of social sciences and humanities. The study utilizes a descriptive qualitative design, sourcing data from a recent journal list of Vietnam State Professorships and the ISI/Scopus database while contrasting it with recent developments in regional academic journals across Southeast Asia. This raises concerns regarding the scholarly publication, including traditional publishing methods, the quality of peer review, and issues relating to publication formatting. I propose some solutions to address these problems, facilitating their entry into the international arena for social sciences and humanities. The proposed solutions encompass editorial management, targeting niche publications, publishing exclusively in English, adopting digitalization, and improving editorial awareness.

Keywords: Social Sciences and Humanities; Academic Journals; Vietnam; Publishing Process; Southeast Asia.

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1. Introduction

Academic publishing is critical in keeping researchers updated on new findings that contribute to human advancement and provide insights into social advances. As a result, the proliferation of scientific journals has created a formal platform for scientists to circulate their scholarly ideas and exchange them with their peers. Academic communities in a specific academic field use academic publications to disseminate new scientific results (Sophie-Anne 2005). The increased ease of printing, the Internet,

and social media across centuries has triggered a speedy increase in academic editions to support scholars embarking on their publishing journey. The role of globalization and the diffusion of academic information on the Internet have accelerated the speed of ideas and encouraged academic journals to increase their visibility in scholarly communities (Zitt and Bassecoulard 1998).

Social sciences and humanities are essential for comprehending human behavior, preserving cultural heritage, fostering cultural heritage, and guiding policymaking. In general, the development of these fields has integrated with natural and technological sciences in order to better

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discern emergent social contexts like education, cultures, economies, and health (Kranzberg 1971: 31-33). Publishing in the social sciences and humanities is essential for a country because it facilitates the dissemination of research findings on critical societal issues and strengthens the link between technological advancement and human development. The application of social sciences and humanities research necessitates an extended timeframe for improved verification and utility; however, its continuous updates yield valuable insights for policymakers to guide social transformation. The advancement of research in natural sciences must parallel the growth of social sciences and humanities to enhance understanding of sustainable development and prioritize human considerations in the developmental goals of researchers and society (Mabe 2009). The quality of these publications heavily depends on the engagement with social issues within the framework of harmonious development, rather than merely focusing on journal ranking and author reputation.

Southeast Asia, as a developing area of Asia, does not possess a rich history of scientific and technological advancement seen in Europe; nevertheless, there is a pressing need for comprehensive research into its social sciences and humanities issues. Despite over a century of scholarly social sciences publications, exemplified by the debut of the *Journal of Siam Society* from Thailand in 1906, which is published entirely in English, the demand for high-quality regional journals still persists. Southeast Asian countries have outlined a plan to install a regional research database, facilitating journal membership acquisition and providing streamlined access to reputed indexers. Thailand has positioned itself as a vanguard in this vision, with the Thai

Citation Index (TCI) ranking many Thai journals within the national academic system. Subsequently, the country established the ASEAN Citation Index (ACI), which features a huge database of high-quality Southeast Asian academic journals, thereby bridging these journals with Web of Sciences and Scopus databases (Narongrit et al. 2012; ASEAN Citation Index Homepage 2021). The database indexes 406 Southeast Asian journals, 222779 articles, and 309431 authors (ASEAN Citation Index Homepage 2023).

This article focuses on a particular case study of Vietnam. The country explored various concepts regarding the significance of scientific publications and the enhancement of the academic standards of Vietnamese journals. This also dates back to the long-standing Vietnamese history of sciences and the role of academic documentation in enriching universal knowledge (Do Huong Thao 2017). The arrival of the French during colonial times, coupled with advancements in technology, stimulated the growth of the printing industry. Unfortunately, the scarcity of scholarly publications by native researchers reflects a sluggish progression in Vietnam, despite that the foundational contributions made by French colonists during this era. During the Cold War, conflicts and their aftermath in Vietnam hindered the comprehensive development of scientific activities. Nonetheless, there was a noticeable increase in scientific publications by Vietnamese researchers, as evidenced by the *Bulletin of Literature, History, and Geography* in North Vietnam and the *Bulletin of History and Geography* in South Vietnam. Following the conclusion of the war, the reunified state conducted a thorough evaluation of its scientific policies and expanded research opportunities in both

general and emerging sciences, including technology and information. This approach enabled Vietnamese researchers to engage actively in regional and international scientific communities.

However, a pathway exists for Vietnamese academic journals to achieve international recognition as reputable publications. An indexer, while not the exclusive assessor of a journal's quality, offers researchers as means to evaluate

journal quality through updated statistics from an international database. Despite the growing reputation of various Vietnamese natural sciences journals, the issue of achieving international recognition still persists. Furthermore, despite the recognition attained by certain economics journals have achieved some recognition, they are excluded from the social sciences and humanities category in the Scimago database, as per Scimago's categorization.

Table 1: *The number of Scopus journals in Southeast Asia as of 2023*

Country	Number of social sciences journals	Number of humanities journals
Brunei Darussalam	0	0
Cambodia	0	0
Indonesia	65	26
Laos	No data	
Malaysia	36	18
Myanmar	No data	
Singapore	47	6
Thailand	20	10
The Philippines	9	6
Timor Lester	No data	
Vietnam	0	0

(Source: Scimago Journal & Country Rank 2024)

Table 1 indicates that Vietnam is actively seeking to enhance the quantity of social sciences and humanities journals in Southeast Asia. The country's performance lags behind that of its regional counterparts, with Singapore at the forefront in the production of high-quality journals, succeeded by Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Professorship panels have highlighted the importance of Vietnamese academic journals to alter their scoring criteria to achieve recognition as reputable publications (Trinh Thi Phuong Thao and Vu The Anh 2021). The criteria for assessing a journal's quality are not explicitly stated, raising questions for researchers about their confidence in the quality of Vietnamese journals. This

situation also limits the capacity of Vietnamese scholarly journals in terms of the methods editors may utilize to promote their journals (Le Tung Son and Tran Ngoc Hau 2020).

The quality of scientific publications in Vietnam has generated contentious literary discussions. Nguyen Van Tuan (2016) examined the efficiency of Vietnamese researchers in the context of international scientific publishing arena. The data suggests that the volume of Vietnamese scholarly publications in the social sciences and humanities is significantly lower than that of neighboring countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. This has affected both the quantity and quality of Vietnamese journals, resulting in a decrease in the number of citations. Others, like

Pham Hiep and Vu Minh Huyen (2019), conducted a thorough statistical analysis and concurred with Nguyen Van Tuan (2016) that Vietnamese articles fail to meet the international standards for publication concerning formality, language quality, and the reliability of the peer review process (Phạm Hiệp and Vũ Minh Huyền 2019: 19-20). Nguyen Phuc Quan's 2022 research identifies indicators of low-quality social sciences and humanities articles, including poor English, ambiguous research methodologies, and simplistic presentations of research results. An additional article in the proceedings of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities Hanoi addresses issues pertaining to social sciences and humanities journals in Vietnam. Editors who fail to recognize mismanagement and journals lacking clear guidelines can undermine the reputation and violate publication ethics (University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU 2020). The issue arises from an unethical peer review process and a failure to overcome political biases associated with the critical thinking abilities of Vietnamese researchers (Nguyen Quang Thuan 2019: 8).

Numerous online newspaper articles demonstrate the overall decline of Vietnamese academic journals, especially in the social sciences and humanities. There is an increasing interest in potential solutions to improve the quality. It is essential to conduct a comprehensive study on the current state of Vietnamese social sciences and humanities editions, offer recommendations for improving journal quality, and motivate foreign authors to view Vietnam as a fertile ground for their scholarly publications in these disciplines. This study examines the managerial style of Vietnamese editors in their respective journals, utilizing anecdotal experience and

personal observations, alongside established criteria from Web of Sciences and Scopus. I assessed the effectiveness of the current Vietnamese state in improving the quality of scientific publications. This article also offers academic recommendations to enhance the narrative of Vietnamese social sciences and humanities publications in the forthcoming year of Vietnamese sciences.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

This study employs a descriptive research design. This instrument systematically and accurately describes facts, providing a precise account of the features associated with specific phenomena, and examining the interplay between selected variables. This research design allows researchers to address inquiries related to current events (Dulock 1993). This method was employed to generalize among peers in Vietnamese social sciences and humanities journals and to highlight significant factors influencing the landscape of scholarly publications in Vietnam.

2.2 Research area

This research examines social sciences and humanities journals that are authored and published in Vietnam. This scope encompasses various sub-fields within the social sciences and humanities, including sociology, psychology, education studies, literature and linguistics, historical studies, and geography. Vietnam's scholarly journal publications can be classified into two main categories. The first group comprises specialized journals, specifically designed for a distinct discipline. The Vietnam

Academy Institute publishes the *Vietnam Social Science* journal. On the other hand, university-administered journals are multidisciplinary, incorporating social sciences and humanities fields forming a sub-section in each issue.

2.3 Data collection and analysis

The data was sourced from Vietnam Journals Online (VJOL), a digital platform for Vietnamese journals. Annual statistics of Vietnamese professorships were utilized, along with yearly statistics related to the Vietnamese journal impact factor from the Vietnam National University, the ASEAN Citation Index (ACI), the Web of Sciences (ISI), and Elsevier/Scimago (Scopus). I utilized specific Scopus evaluative criteria to assess the journal's quality, ensuring the application of a standardized technique and facilitating a sound judgment. Additionally, I employed observation, employing a comparative method, to identify the similarities and differences in the development and management of journals among Southeast Asian nations and Vietnam, ultimately revealing distinctions between Vietnam and other countries. Following the collection and analysis of data, I provide a detailed overview of Vietnam's strategy for landscape transformation and offered insights into internationalization. I conducted in-depth interviews with lecturers, researchers, and editors who are actively engaged with professional publications in reputable Southeast Asian journals. Following our meeting, I conducted a debriefing session to give participants the opportunity to ask any questions and share any additional information they deemed pertinent. To address this situation, I utilized the reality-solution method, providing both academic and practical recommendations for

Vietnamese editors to enhance a the internationalization of academic journals.

Regarding ethical considerations, I implemented fieldwork and observation methods, ensuring participants' rights to confidentiality during the data collection process. The identification of Vietnamese academic journals in the social sciences and humanities is essential to mitigate conflicts of interests and to facilitate the effective functioning of these journals within the academic network of Vietnamese researchers.

3. Findings

3.1 The age-old journal publishing process

For scientists, the quality of their academic work significantly influences their academic background and dedication to scientific development (Lee and Barry 2005). In Vietnam, scientific journals appeared in the early 20th century, coinciding with the expansion of international journals (National Research Council (US) Committee 2003). Vietnamese researchers placed greater importance on yearly reports of Vietnamese professorship to choose their preferred journal. This council categorizes social sciences and humanities into sub-sections, with each sub-section having its own council tasked with evaluating the quality of Vietnamese academic journals. These sections typically encompass literature, culture, arts, sports, history, archeology, ethnology, linguistics, education, and economics. In Vietnam, social sciences and humanities publications can be classified into: specialized journals, the *Journal of Historical Research* (Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Lịch sử), the *Vietnam Journal of Indian and Asian Studies* (Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Ấn Độ

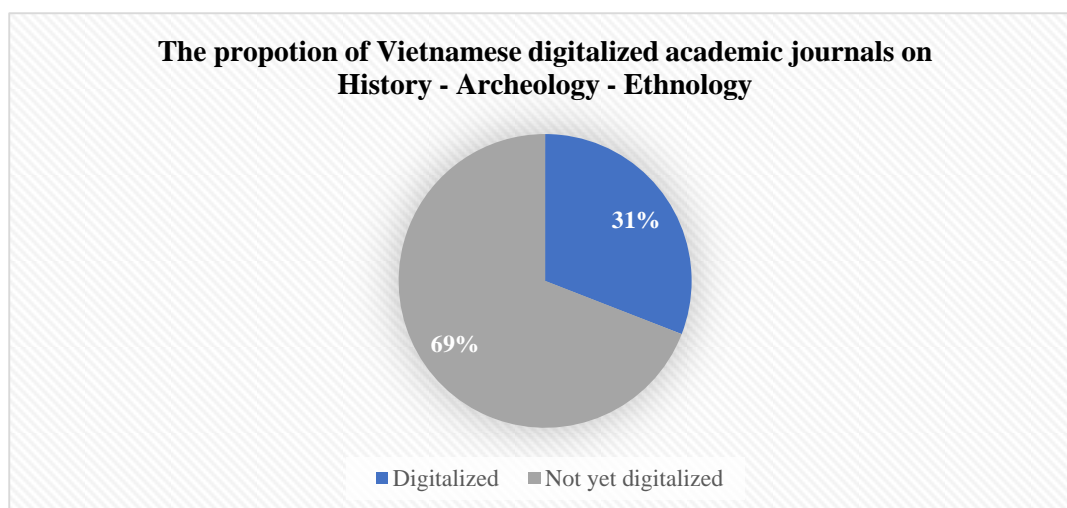
và Châu Á), and the *Vietnam Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (Tập chí Nghiên cứu Đông Nam Á), and multidisciplinary journals that include social sciences and humanities sections, generally overseen by local universities and institutions.

Professors with expertise assess the quality of these journals, producing an annual ranked list. Vietnamese researchers often refer to the Professorship Council's website to determine if their chosen journal as a "reputed" journal. The criteria employed for these evaluations are unclear, resulting in a lack of confidence among researchers regarding the reliability of the

rankings. Vietnamese academics generally prefer well-established and reputable journals, especially those affiliated with the Vietnam Academy of Social Science (VASS).

The majority of Vietnamese social sciences and humanities journals have not achieved open access status for their readership. The increasing demand for readily and freely available knowledge has emerged as a significant issue in the digital era. The author identified a lack of valuable information in reputable Vietnamese social sciences and humanities journals that would engage both writers and readers.

Figure 1: The proportion of Vietnamese digitalized academic journals focused on History, Archeology, and Ethnology



(Source: Vietnamese Professorship Council 2023)

When discussing the digitalization of journals, the author refers to full open access, or, alternatively, the option for writers to choose open access for their published articles. Unfortunately, after reviewing 55 Vietnamese academic journals on history, archaeology, and ethnology listed by the Vietnamese Professorship Council in 2023, the author found that only 17 journals (31% of the total) offered open access to readers (Figure

1). Many of these journals, even those with websites, still do not provide open access.

This indicates that many reputable Vietnamese academic journals in these disciplines persist in utilizing conventional approaches, depending on subscription-based models for interaction with readers and authors. This antiquated method enables revenue generation for journal sustainability but increasingly misaligns with contemporary academic publishing practices. Editors of international journals

acknowledge the significance of digitalization and allocate resources to develop websites for effective content distribution for reader engagement. A well-structured website facilitates reader access to publications and aids prospective authors in comprehending the journal's aims, scope, publication ethics, and peer review process. Additionally, digital platforms frequently feature reader counters, enabling editors to monitor and grow their audience. The hesitation to embrace open access indicates that Vietnamese academic journals encounter difficulties associated with the Code of Publication Ethics (COPE) established in 2005, which underscore the importance of maintaining rigorous ethical standards in publishing.

Vietnamese social sciences and humanities journals offer open access to their readership. Nonetheless, certain journals may not gain advantages from this policy due to issues related to financial sustainability, intellectual property rights, and the quality of peer review quality (Pinfield 2005). The *Vietnam Social Science* developed a journal website; however, it was delayed in providing online publications to its audience. Moreover, despite maintaining their own websites, certain journals rapidly return to conventional publication methods. Consequently, many publications do not adequately engage with domestic and international audiences. The significance of online submission and publication enhances journal quality by allowing submitters to manage manuscript workflow, access their published works promptly, and disseminate them with peer networks. The online system also provides journals with a standardized reference style, a citation management platform, and compatibility with other indexers, including the Digital

Object Identifier (DOI), Google Scholar, and ISI/Scopus system.

3.2 Categorization, peer review process, and publication formatting

In scholarly publishing, it is crucial for editors to clearly identify and classify article types. This facilitates navigation for researchers and readers, enabling them to locate relevant content effectively, particularly in online publications where physical pages browsing not feasible. The categorization of articles reinforces quality standards, as distinct article types necessitate differing levels of rigor, methodology, and approaches. Moreover, it enhances the efficiency of the indexing and abstracting process, facilitating the organization and inclusion of articles in specialized fields indexed by global databases.

A research article disseminates original findings by an author or research team, usually published in peer-reviewed academic journals to maintain rigorous standards of quality, accuracy, and relevance. The articles adhere to a structured format comprising an introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion, facilitating effective communication of the research process and findings (Cambridge University Press 2024). The main objective of a research article is to enhance understanding within a particular discipline by presenting novel insights, theories, or empirical evidence. Conversely, review articles synthesize existing knowledge and provide scientific insights for further academic inquiry without producing new research. Certain journals publish case reports that detail individual cases or small series of cases, typically emphasizing rare or unusual conditions. Furthermore, book

reviews analyze recently published works, determining their significance and contribution to the journal's discipline.

By categorizing articles into these types, journals provide a clear structure that benefits both authors and readers, ensuring that high-quality content is accessible and easily understood. However, many editors of social sciences and humanities journals may not fully appreciate the importance of this practice. As a result, readers often struggle to distinguish between research and review articles due to unclear editorial guidelines, and authors may not fully understand the differences between these types. Rarely published book reviews in Vietnamese social sciences and humanities journals deprive readers of understanding the significance of recently published books in academic communities. Most Vietnamese social sciences and humanities journals have not effectively grouped articles by their appropriate subject fields. Arts, humanities, and social sciences cover a broad range of disciplines, and it is essential for editors to clearly define the journal's aims and scope in their descriptions. This clarity enables authors to better identify which field their manuscript aligns with when submitting an article, allowing editors to assign reviewers with the right expertise. Subject codes play a crucial role in organizing and categorizing research papers, articles, and other academic materials based on their subject matter. This system helps researchers, scholars, and students easily find and access relevant information in their specific fields of interest. It provides a standardized method for classifying academic publications, making it easier for databases, libraries, and search engines to index and retrieve content. Ultimately, this improves

the discoverability and accessibility of academic works for readers.

Moreover, the inclusion of social sciences and humanities sections in a scientific journal's broader scope hinders their potential for international recognition. Local universities typically implement this model. ACI, a regional scientific database, includes a few journals, such as the Dalat University Journal of Science and the Thai Nguyen Journal of Science and Technology. However, these journals face difficulties in joining international indexers due to their broad scope and aim, making it impossible for any specific subject category to encompass all journal content.

Readers' reluctance to understand the main stages of the peer review process stemmed from the poor performance of digitalization and the insufficient information provided. The reliability of this process lies in the category of reviews that editors benefit from. Academic journals prefer double-blinded review to anonymize the identities of referees and authors, preventing biases and enhancing review quality. However, the mismanagement of editors resulted in the disclosure of author information, and more concerningly, the presence of unhidden author information in social sciences and humanities journals could potentially lead to conflicting interests and bias. The lack of digitalization and the minimal information provided to readers further hampers transparency, particularly regarding the key stages of the peer review process.

The journal policy lacks clarity, leaving authors unaware of the journal's peer review process and the length of time editors take to process a manuscript. The quality of the peer review results does not significantly enhance the quality of the manuscript. In some cases, editors skip the

peer review process because the author is affiliated with the journal's governing body. Journals operated by Communist Party propaganda offices also follow a strict blinded review process, focusing on political orientation rather than academic rigors such as originality, research methodology, and content.

Additionally, the inconsistency of reference style persists in Vietnamese social sciences and humanities journals. Citations are crucial for researchers and journals to enhance their standing in the academic sphere. Google Scholar helps address this issue, enabling researchers to manage the number of citations in the cited content of an article and maintain a consistent reference style. However, well-established Vietnamese journals neither specify author guidelines in their reference styles nor comply with international citation criteria, publication ethics, and professional operations. The absence of a huge academic database and domestic ranking in Vietnam also leads to a delay in adapting the reference style so that the value of a novel research article could be defined by its citation numbers (Björk 2003). Vietnam National University's Vietnam Citation Index (VCI) lacks information on academic journals and their citation frequency. Researchers still need an instrument to evaluate the quality of a social sciences and humanities edition in Vietnam, so they can select those platforms for their publication.

3.3 Pathway for internationalization

Social sciences and humanities are critical for Vietnam's growth and help the country gain international recognition for developing these fields in Southeast Asia. Therefore, scientific journals play a crucial role for Vietnamese universities and institutions, not only in accessing

international scientific databases but also in fostering relationships with other countries for scientific collaboration and projects that contribute to the sustainable development of Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Such ideal visions may also encounter a range of challenges related to financial budgets, state policies, and the operational style of journals.

The success of these publications in Vietnam is largely dependent on the efficacy of editorial management. Unlike magazines, academic editors need to understand the academic publishing process and ensure the meticulous and efficient execution of each stage of manuscript publication. Editors receive and evaluate submitted articles, assessing their appropriateness for publication based on relevance, methodology, and research quality. In certain instances, they may engage associate editors or members of the editorial board to provide a comprehensive preliminary review, an essential process for validating the originality of the research.

Editors also have the authority to reject manuscripts that lack scientific merit or do not provide a significant advancement to knowledge. In evaluations, the originality of the research must be the foremost consideration, along with other critical factors such as academic rigor, language quality, publication standards, and methodological dependability. Upholding a high rejection rate is essential for ensuring journal quality and enforcing compliance with professional publishing standards. In Vietnam, editors may not consistently enforce stringent rejection of subpar manuscripts, frequently permitting authors greater flexibility to amend their submissions.

Editors bear significant responsibility for supervising the peer review process and

guaranteeing the anonymity and impartiality of evaluations. They must ensure that reviewers deliver comprehensive input to enhance papers and pursue additional reviews where the first response is cursory or deficient in depth. This necessitates continuous editorial training and nationwide seminars to provide social sciences and humanities editors with chances for thought-sharing journal enhancement. Thailand exemplifies leadership in this initiative. Thai journal editors convene annually at workshops conducted by the Thai Journal Center, where seasoned editors assist in optimizing the journal publishing process. The *Quality Improvement of Thai Journals Workshop* is a pivotal event that augments editors' understanding of the professional publishing process and fosters communication between authors, reviewers, and editors at all stages. These workshops are essential for recognizing outstanding regional journals and inviting editors from reputable publications to share their insights on journal operations. Undergraduate and graduate training programs should integrate

academic writing courses to enhance students' academic writing skills.

An autonomous council or the respective faculties must undertake an extensive overhaul of journal administration to govern the social sciences and humanities. Multidisciplinary universities currently oversee Vietnamese academic journals, which have a multidisciplinary structure. These academic periodicals consolidate all sections into a single issue. This approach hinders efforts towards internationalizing journals, as these publications face challenges in indexing in databases like Scopus and catering to specialized fields in the social sciences and humanities (Miller and partners 2004). For instance, universities in Thailand submit their academic journals to the Thailand Citation Index (TCI) system, where they undergo review and approval to join the ACI database. Subsequently, the TCI center advocates for improved journal quality and assists in indexing those journals in the Scopus database. The table below shows that the Scopus database accepted many social sciences and humanities journals from Thailand.

Table 2: *The list of Thai Scopus social sciences and humanities journals*

Thai Scopus Journal title	Journal administration
Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Studies (HASSS)	Silpakorn University Research, Innovation and Creativity Administration Office
Thammasat Review (TUREVIEW)	Research Administration Division, Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus
The Journal of Mekong Societies (JMS)	Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region (CERP), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University
Journal of Multidisciplinary in Social Sciences (JMSS)	Research and Development Institute, Suan Dusit University
Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences (KJSS)	Kasetsart University Research and Development Institute (KURDI)
Journal of the Siam Society (JSS)	Siam Society under Royal Patronage

(Source: Scimago Journal & Country Rank 2024)

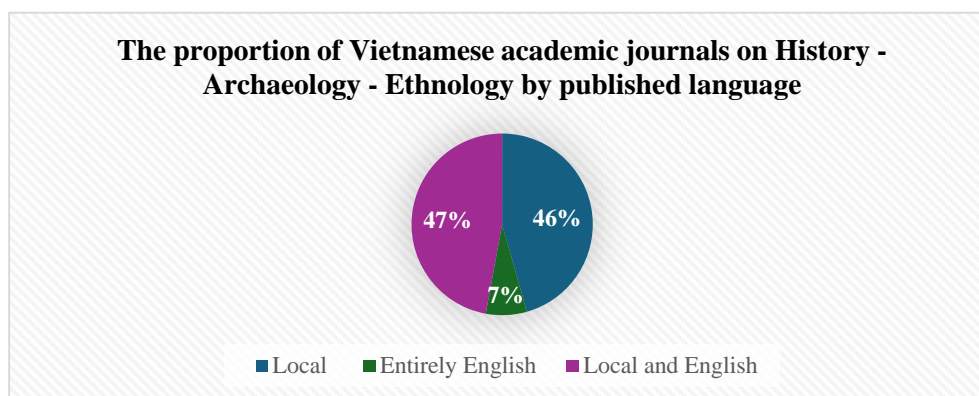
English publishing closely aligns with efforts to internationalize journals.

Academic circles most often use English as the worldwide lingua franca, leading to

most international research being written in this language. Publishing in English allows a journal to reach a wider audience, allowing more researchers around the world to access its material. This not only

improves the visibility of the research but also makes the exchange of results and ideas more effective, thereby helping researchers expand their academic networks all around.

Figure 2: *The proportion of Vietnamese academic journals on History - Archaeology - Ethnology by published language*



(Source: Vietnamese Professorship Council 2023)

Because English issues are readily available in Vietnam, academic publications in the humanities and social sciences urge writers to submit English papers. Certain periodicals incorporate both Vietnamese and English manuscripts within the same issue. However, the majority of social sciences and humanities journals in Vietnam still favor English, which hinders the publication of content to attract a broader readership and foreign contributors. For example, I reviewed Vietnamese journals in the History-Archeology-Ethnology discipline published by the Vietnamese Professorship Council and found that only 7% of these journals were published entirely in English, while 47% had local-language editions (See Figure 2 above).

Hiring professional editors or proofreaders, particularly native English speakers, can be expensive, especially for small-scale, local journals or institutions. Additionally, drafting an entire article in English often requires strong policy support

by universities and a far-reaching vision of a chief editor (Salager-Meyer 2008). Many researchers also express concerns about the need to write in a foreign language rather than their native tongue when publishing an article. While inclusion in international databases like Scopus does not require a journal to be entirely in English, publishing in English obviously expands journal readership and increases citations. The problem is that English is not Vietnam's second language. Despite the encouragement to publish a work in English, few Vietnamese authors choose this language as their primary discourse for scientific findings. When asking a Ph.D. student on the necessity of English written publications in social sciences and humanities, that person responded to me that: *"I specialize in Literature and Linguistics. Asking me to author my articles entirely in English is unreasonable. How can I write about Vietnamese literature in English rather than in my mother tongue?"*

(interview with a Ph.D. student, male, 28 years old, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)”

Many editors choose traditional publishing styles to manage their press, which poses a challenge to disseminating social sciences and humanities findings to readers. At present, Vietnamese social sciences and humanities journals either use the Vietnam Journal Online platform, which allows most editions to reach readers through this gateway, or provide a separate online platform. However, the manual processes of many respected journals published by top-ranked Vietnamese universities and academies make it challenging for readers to stay informed about new publications in their field. Shifting from print to online-only publications would make articles readily available for both domestic and international readers and create a digital archive of past issues. Editors, authors, and reviewers can manage the manuscript process more efficiently with platforms like the Open Journal System (OJS), widely used by Vietnamese academic journals. For example, in Thailand, all academic journals use OJS, and the Thai Journal System has a dedicated center to assist editors with technical issues and journal operations. This center also runs annual training workshops for editors on managing and designing journal websites (Thai Journal Index Center 2024).

Moreover, I recommend publishing in the social sciences and humanities journals to assemble a competent international editorial board. This method involves specialists from various geographical regions and disciplines, ensuring a broad range of viewpoints and knowledge. This diversity results in superior published research and a more comprehensive peer review process. An international board

represents the worldwide research community, promotes inclusion, and ensures that scholars from many regions participate in the editorial process. In some cases, these committees also consult with editors to navigate cultural and political sensitivities, as well as variations in research methodologies. Enhancing the academic network allows editors to engage with a wider array of researchers and scholars. Nonetheless, social sciences and humanities continue to encounter difficulties pertaining to finances, academic networks, and policy constraints.

Our editorial board cannot be attracted by well qualified and reputable academics with our current budget. Although our editorial board members remain inactive, we do have a fair range of domestic expertise; occasionally I have to make decisions based just on assessments of reviews (interview with an editor of a social sciences and humanities journal in southern Vietnam, female, 28 years old, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam).

The interaction between editors and reviewers is crucial, particularly in the process of selecting reviewers under their supervision and the ability of specialists to provide initial guidance on manuscripts. If an article exhibits deficiencies in writing quality or novelty, the assigned reviewers ought to advise the Editor-in-Chief to decline the submission in order to uphold academic standards. The originality of an article is critical to the journal's reputation in the social sciences and humanities and can impact citation rates. Thai journals have implemented a peer review policy that involves three potential reviewers and additional reviewers to rigorously evaluate a specific manuscript, thereby assisting authors in enhancing the quality of their publications.

With indexation in ACI, ISI, and Scopus databases, editors of social sciences and humanities publications should finally strive to satisfy international publishing criteria. While ACI may be a more achievable goal based on the necessary enhancements, ISI/Scopus could be overly optimistic if editors are ultimately accountable for their journal's quality. ACI indexation, which is based in Thailand, is a prestigious benchmark for academic evaluation in Southeast Asia. The latest ACI re-evaluation, which took place on July 15, 2024, indexed 31 Vietnamese academic journals in the database (ASEAN Citation Index Homepage 2024). Including Vietnamese social sciences and humanities publications in the ACI would raise their profile and widen their readership around Southeast Asia. It would also improve the reputation and recognition of these journals throughout the regional academic community, drawing more applications from well-qualified researchers and enhancing the quality of the produced work. Since many credible worldwide publications are indexed in similar databases such as ISI and Scopus, indexing in ACI helps Southeast Asian publications match with international standards.

Thailand has developed a strong infrastructure for quality assessment via the Thai Citation Index (TCI), which offers a model of effective indexation. The Vietnam Citation Gateway (V-Citation Gate), designed to index top-notch Vietnamese publications, does not include all Vietnamese publications, but it fits this approach well. For Thai journals, reaching ACI indexation marks a major turning point; Thai editors have put considerable effort toward this target. Often hosting insightful seminars to educate editors on quality enhancement, the TCI may

recommend to Vietnamese journals that they adopt this paradigm, thereby fostering the growth of social sciences and humanities publications that align with the experiences of neighboring nations.

4. Conclusion

This article highlights the significant issues afflicting Vietnamese social sciences and humanities publications, as well as their efforts toward internationalization. Despite the implementation of favorable policies and the editors' heightened awareness of the need to advance their journals, none of Vietnam's social sciences and humanities publications appear in global databases. The traditional publishing process's enduring influence is affecting the accessibility of journals to a broad audience. The blurring of information boundaries and an imprecise peer review process are causing submitters, particularly authors from outside Vietnam, to be inadequately prepared to contribute to a publication. Moreover, inadequate classification, inconsistent peer review methods, and issues with article formatting further diminish journal quality. Furthermore, social sciences and humanities journals show a reluctance to embrace internationalization, as the inadequacy of international publishing practices and digitalization poses a significant obstacle for Vietnamese editors seeking membership in international indexing systems.

Considering the regional context and worldwide standards, I propose five methods for Vietnamese editors to enhance journal quality. First, effective editorial management is essential for assessing article quality and making decisions about the manuscript. Editors' ability to reject

subpar articles and solicit evaluations from editorial board members for initial submissions would improve journal quality and reputation. Second, a transition from diverse publications to those concentrating on social sciences and humanities would ensure a more limited scope within the discipline and facilitate suitable indexation. Third, to enhance their international reputation and audience, Vietnamese scholarly publications should consider English their principal language. Fourth, Vietnamese journals should embrace digitalization by implementing digital transformation to provide open-access publications and streamline online processes for editors, reviewers, authors, and readers. A digital method would allow journals to align with worldwide databases and implement a standardized citation style. Fifth, to improve the efficacy of their editorial procedures, Vietnamese social sciences and humanities editors should participate in editorial training workshops to gain knowledge about international publications.

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