

# Publishing and Disseminating Knowledge in Scientific Journals: Challenges and Decisions

## Publicar e Difundir o Conhecimento em Periódicos Científicos: Desafios e Decisões

## Publicar y Difundir el Conocimiento en Revistas Científicas: Desafíos y Decisiones

Why do we research, write, and publish scientific articles? Literally, to share scientific discoveries that are relevant to the advancement of knowledge and its products (technical and technological), as well as to communicate the possible benefits of its results to society. In practical terms, for researchers, students, and professionals who research, it means publicizing to the scientific and professional community what is thought and produced in a certain area of knowledge, in order to obtain recognition for their theoretical, methodological, or technical contributions. However, it also means expanding its participation in networks of national and international researchers, getting good technical evaluations in academia and in the research funding agencies, acquiring necessary technological and economical support and sufficient human resources for production and dissemination of scientific knowledge.

Producing scientific knowledge is the “raw material” of the researcher’s work. Once disseminated in scientific journals, the knowledge produced and shared with society is ready to be transformed and valued socially and economically in the provision of professional services, in teaching, in the elaboration of projects and programs, and in the theoretical-technical support of methods and technical resources. A scientific publication, on the other hand, is a kind of material certification of the knowledge produced. It is evaluated, on its merits, by members of the scientific community through double blind peer review, based on its relevance, methodological accuracy, results, and contributions to society.

Those who produce knowledge, in all areas, make a permanent effort to publish their studies in scientific journals. There is a persistent search, inside and outside universities, for social visibility, career recognition, and salience in theoretical, methodological, and instrumental contributions, supported by basic or applied research. Researchers, either at the beginning of their careers or those more experienced, can feel lost and confused when they receive conflicting messages, and amidst the pressure to publish as much and as well as possible, realize that quality research and innovation takes time and effort. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the effort to publish is directed towards qualified journals in the scientific community.

In this context, “publish or perish”, an expression consecrated in the scientific community, describes the pressure on researchers to produce and publish constantly, in order to advance in their academic careers, remain competitive in their area of knowledge,

or simply trying to remain productive in terms of scientific production over time. Initially coined in 1932 by Coolidge (1866-1928), American educator and diplomat, it was popularized in the 1950s in the international community, and over the last few decades, practically became a “mantra”, internalized in the modus operandi of researchers, to obtain public recognition for their work, and to a certain extent, influence scientific thinking and professional practices, as well as generate information to produce policies and actions in different organizational contexts (Aliukonis et al., 2020; Clapham, 2005; Miller et al., 2011).

One of the negative consequences of “publish or perish” was to trigger intense competitiveness and productivism in academia and among researchers. Attempts to research and publish at an increasingly accelerated pace have led to a substantial increase in article submissions to scientific journals. On the other hand, there is a loss of quality in the submitted manuscripts — a significant part with technical, theoretical, and methodological deficiencies — incompatible with the minimum requirements to be certified and published, based on peer reviews. It is for no other reason that scientific journals are increasingly attentive and should promote care with the “immaturity biases” of manuscripts - plagiarism, poor scientific writing, insufficient data and information, theoretical inconsistencies, simplified analyses, missing or incomprehensible arguments, and obscure relevance or merit (Cruz et al., 2020a; Cruz et al., 2020b).

Publishing an article in a scientific journal is the result of a set of efforts on the part of authors and editors. It requires commitment, motivation, dedication, discipline, organization, knowledge, technical skills and ethical commitment to the merit of the research activity and to the dissemination of scientific knowledge in society. There are important challenges to be considered when editing a highly demanded scientific journal, such as rPOT: the maintenance of a team of editors and technical assistants dedicated to its internal organization and maintenance, and especially, the need for financial support for its editorial activities (professional services of proofreaders and translators, fees related to the layout and editing of articles, payment of the Digital Object Identifier [DOI], among other obligations).

On February 8, 2023, an extraordinary assembly of the Brazilian Association of Organizational and Work Psychology (SBPOT) took place. One of the subjects discussed was the sustainability of the *Revista Psicologia Organizações e Trabalho* (rPOT). This topic had already been the subject of discussions at tables

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held during the Brazilian Congresses of Organizational and Work Psychology (CBPOT). Such discussions allowed the maturation of the analysis on the problems of this sustainability. From them, a proposal for a solution emerged, which was detailed by the Editor-in-Chief of rPOT. It was presented by the SBPOT Board of Directors at this assembly, in order to make a decision.

rPOT has substantially reduced its expenses in the last years related to layout, DOI deposit and registration, editorial assistant income, and translation prices, amongst others. The journal publishes 14 articles and one editorial quarterly, totaling 56 articles and four editorials per year. The current estimated cost of each published article is around R\$920, with a total cost of approximately R\$ 51,000, every year, to SBPOT (values presented in the assembly). As a result, rPOT represents the Association's second highest cost. This expense was traditionally covered by the cession of copyrights to several books, whose resources are used to maintain the journal. However, year after year these resources have been decreasing, as a result of the crisis in the book publishing market. They are no longer sufficient to guarantee the sustainability of rPOT.

The proposal approved in the assembly was the institution of an initial amount of R\$ 600.00 (six hundred reais — from the second half of 2023 — to be charged for each article accepted for publication. SBPOT associates - who appear as the first or second author of the articles - will get a 50% discount on this amount. In the context of scientific publishing, this type of contribution is called the article processing charge (APC). In the case of rPOT, there will be no fee for submitting or evaluating submitted manuscripts.

APCs are common in open access journals on the Internet, which do not charge for access to the articles they publish, but which also do not have continuous sources of financial resources that guarantee their sustainability. In the absence of these resources, the authors of the articles — or affiliating institutions or sponsors, in most cases — pay this fee to cover the costs of this publication. APCs are usually used to cover costs with digitization, revision, formatting and indexing services, for example. There is no evidence that the adoption of this charge reduces the number of articles published in these journals (Khoo, 2019).

In March 2023, according to data from the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), more than ten thousand journals, among the nearly seventeen thousand listed therein, charged APCs. These fees are charged by most open access journals, in order to guarantee such access — for good quality articles — in sustainable journals. Policies on APCs and their values differ between countries and subject areas. The percentage of articles published by Brazilians in journals with APCs has increased - an average value of US\$ 960 (Pavan & Barbosa, 2018). The amount paid per article grew by 79% between 2012 and 2019, but this increase is attributed to commercial journals — an average value of US\$ 1500 — and not to non-profit journals (Alencar & Barbosa, 2021).

Researching plays a crucial role in the development and innovations in society. In turn, the fate of the research depends on its quality and success in publication. Among the demands of maintaining open access scientific journals, but without the necessary financial conditions to adequately sustain them, the institution of a fee for the publication of an accepted article in the rPOT represents a difficult decision, but one that has become inevitable.

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