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Gatekeepers or gatecrashers? The inside connection in editorial board publications of Turkish national journals

Lokman Tutuncu[1]

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Abstract
This study investigates publication portfolio of 2684 editors in 255 Turkish university journals in Social Sciences. It argues that semi-closed structures of university journals are places fostering insider culture and editors engaging in inside publication practice are likely to publish inside articles of their colleagues from the same institution. The research relies on the contrast between inside articles and international articles to quantify editors' publication behaviour. Results show that editors demonstrate widespread insider behaviour and rarely publish international articles. Editors' inside articles correspond to nearly one third of their national research output and outnumber Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) publications by 3.5 to 1. Two measures, board inside articles and inside-to-SSCI article ratio are used to test the association between editor and journal inside publications and show that editors publishing through inside connections facilitate publication of inside papers. At the individual level, editorial seniority, academic seniority and academic experience are related to insider behaviour, while female editors and editors with overseas PhD degrees are negatively associated. Education journal editors are the most prolific SSCI publishers (2 papers per editor) while Faculty of Science and Literature journal editors are the most prolific insiders (6.6 inside papers per editor). Results indicate an underqualification problem and highlight the importance of meritocratic editor selection to mitigate insider bias.

Keywords Insider bias · Editorial bias · Self-publication · Nepotism · Academic qualification · Scientific productivity

Mathematics Subject Classification 91

JEL Classification I21 · I23 · I28

✉ Lokman Tutuncu
lokman.t@beun.edu.tr

[1] Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (FEAS), Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, Zonguldak, Turkey

Introduction

This study aims to investigate insider bias in journal editor publications in a comprehensive sample of 255 Turkish university journals and 2684 editorial board members. Prior research has shown that editors often self-publish in own journals (Bosnjak, et al., 2011; Luty et al., 2008; Schiermeier, 2008; Walters, 2015; Xu et al., 2021; Zdenek, 2018; Zhang et al., 2021) and publish submissions from close networks of co-authors and colleagues (Brogaard et al., 2014; Ductor & Visser, 2022; Laband & Piette, 1994; Lutmar & Reingewertz, 2021; Medoff, 2003; Sarigöl et al., 2017; Teplitskiy et al., 2018), raising questions about the soundness of the peer review process. As editors are gatekeepers of journals, they are responsible for the quality of the articles published. The papers published in a journal reflect the vision, research culture, and approach of editors to the scholarly research (Besancenot et al., 2012). This study attempts to show the linkage between editors' own publication behaviour and journals' publications and predicts a positive relation between inside publication behaviour of editorial boards and inside papers published in journals under their management. The research is particularly interested in the extent of insider culture across editorial boards and utilizes the number of inside publications benchmarked against the number of publications in Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) indexed journals to present a comparative view of the Turkish journal editors' publication records. University journal editors are often appointed by university rectors or faculty deans, and editorial board members are mostly composed of other faculty members. Although editors' network connections and their concentration along geographical and institutional lines are reported in "editormetrics" research (Brinn & Jones, 2007; Burgess & Shaw, 2010; Mendonça et al., 2018; Santos & Mendonça, 2022), local journals could take these patterns to extreme levels. For example, 99% of chief editors and 86% of all editorial board members in this study are affiliated to the university that publishes the journal.[1] This institutional concentration is often encouraged by senior managers because university journals are expected to represent institutional culture. Yet institutional domination of journal boards is frowned upon (Brinn & Jones, 2007), as undiversified and semi-closed structure of journal boards leads to clientele effect (Heckman & Moktan, 2020), creating an environment prone to favouritism. Turkish university journals provide an ideal setting to examine inside connections in scientific publications as their board structure leaves them exposed to publication requests. Moreover, universities are large academic publishers and play an oversized role in the national academic sphere due to locally focused career regulations. In this setting, academics may target affiliated national journals to meet performance targets and reap career benefits (Tutuncu et al., 2022).

Editors often face immense pressure and requests from fellow faculty members to publish their research in the faculty journal. The editor must be self-disciplined and able to reject the submissions of friends and colleagues (Harvey, 2013; Ougrin, 2019; Sharma, 2016) if the journal quality is to be maintained. However, if the editor is also part of the insider culture, published in the past by means of inside connections and advanced a career based on inside publications, then he/she would lose the authority to reject these kinds of requests. Becoming part of the insider culture and fulfilling these requests could bring monetary and career rewards, however, not prestige and recognition as most national

[1] Own statistics for the 255 journals in this study. Five chief editors currently unaffiliated to the journals' publishing institutions have either recently worked or received their PhD degree from there. Accounting for previous work experience, all chief editors are affiliated to journals' publishers.

journals are not indexed in Web of Science (WOS) or Scopus. Turkish academics have a perilous publication record (Önder & Erdil, 2015; Akçiğit & Tok, 2020; Karadag, 2021), and many are content with national articles as academic promotion regulations do not require international publications. However, career regulations may encourage questionable research practices when meticulous researchers who spend time and effort to produce rigorous research are not rewarded relative to those who publish more often (Bruton et al., 2020). When the system offers negative reward for high-quality research, scholars tend to opt for lower quality (Muller, 2017; Pyne, 2017). Moreover, publication records are often simplified and discounted to a single number such as h-index. Some believe it is more useful to declare a greater number of publications in the resume, regardless of where they are published. Publishing inside could allow academics to bypass tribulations of alien journals and claim a larger number of publications. Fortunately, equipped with modern tools of research, one can determine whether the supposedly prolific individual has published in international journals or in affiliated national journals with rent-seeking motives.

Journal editors should be outstanding scholars with good publication records (Bedeian et al., 2008; Brinn & Jones, 2007; Lowe & Van Fleet, 2009) and research ethics (Smith, 2006) as their performance will create the quality benchmark for the journal (Hardin et al., 2008). Selection to the editorial boards of prestigious journals is a nontrivial event and represents a high scholarly achievement. Editors need to be active researchers to maintain their reputation and remain part of the scientific community (Mani et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2021). In Turkish university journals, however, scientific merit is often not part of editorial selection criteria as editors are appointed by rectors and deans from a small pool of affiliated academics based on personal relations. These academics are typically locally focused, publish papers in national journals for career advancement and for monetary rewards from academic incentive scheme (Demir, 2018). Faculty journals fulfil an important role to meet performance requirements for affiliated academic staff and graduate students, whether it is for academic incentive, first academic job, or tenure. Journal editors are no exception to this reality as they also have career concerns and need to publish. Therefore, an investigation into their publication records is warranted to see their approach to research. As well as their insider behaviour, we are interested in their international publications and scientific merit that leads to their selection to editorial board to inform scientific community about their eligibility for editor positions. If editors are not qualified enough to evaluate submissions, the journal would publish any paper and its attractiveness for good scientists will be low, as publishing in these low-quality journals could be costly for them (Besancenot et al., 2012). If editors have not published international articles before, good researchers are likely to presume that editors are unqualified to validate their work (Lowe & Van Fleet, 2009).

The selective and repeated publications in own journals raise ethical questions about the researcher's academic conduct and journals' peer review process (Luty et al., 2008; Walters, 2015), and greater editorial transparency is required to alleviate concerns (Bosnjak et al., 2011; Scanff et al., 2021). The editor has a liability to protect the integrity of the journals, maintain and improve its reputation, and above all provide a fair evaluation and treatment to all authors. However, editors frequently engage in biased practices and selective favouritism towards members of their inner circle. Luty et al. (2008) lash out at the selective favouritism and Smith (2006) argues that editors must be held accountable for their unethical practices. Several authors argue that selective targeting of affiliated journal could be due to loyalty and does not indicate an ethical problem if the publication is evaluated by other editors and goes through the same restrictive procedure as outsider submissions (Harvey, 2013; Mani et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2021). Exceptions

may apply to cases such as editors managing top journals in the field, and specific career incentives and progression schemes forcing editors to publish in them. Top researchers, including editors, would naturally target top journals. This would likely not lead to editorial bias as these journals often have established procedures to deal with insider submissions that exclude submitting editors from the review process. Moreover, some sub-fields may not have many journals, forcing editors to publish in their own. However, these arguments would not apply to most journals in Turkey as none can be classified as top and few have internationally certified publication standards (e.g., WOS or Scopus indexing). Authors also have many other national journal alternatives. Therefore, the disclaimer that the submitting editor/author is not involved in the peer review of the manuscript would provide little consolation in terms of publication ethics. In the local setting, it would be difficult to believe that the editor next door in the faculty would not have a conflict of interest and reject submission of another faculty member. In many cases, editors could be part of the entrenched insider networks and facilitate publications of friends and other insiders. This study questions authors' logic in the choice of journal and maintains that frequent inside publications in affiliated journals raise questions about the integrity of their scholarly practice.

Utilizing the population of 255 Turkish university journals in Social Sciences, their editorial boards' publication records and over 56,000 papers published in these journals between 2014 and 2021, this study provides an authoritative assessment of the scientific achievement of journal editors and insider bias within editorial boards. Results show that editors frequently publish in own university journals and inside articles outnumber SSCI articles by 3.5 to 1. Chief editors, senior professors, and male editors publish a larger number of inside papers, while female editors and editors with a foreign PhD tend to publish fewer inside papers. Results support the main argument of the study that editors who are part of the insider culture are likely to publish inside articles of friends and colleagues. This study extends the literature in four ways: First, prior studies report on insider bias in journals during the tenure of the editor and they are centred on self-publication, co-author and connected author publications (Bosnjak et al., 2011; Brogaard et al., 2014; Ductor & Visser, 2022; Luty et al., 2008; Mani et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2021; Zdenek, 2018). This study employs a broader insider definition and identifies editors' publication portfolio during their entire career. The inside article definition includes self-publications but also incorporates articles in other journals published by the affiliated university. Second, prior studies rely on premier journals that have a high quality threshold for accepting papers and for selecting editorial board members, and hence the findings of several studies that selective inside publications improve quality of the journal (Brogaard et al., 2014; Medoff, 2003). This study covers 255 nationally indexed journals, of which a minority of 44 are indexed in Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), and only 1 is indexed in Art and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI). Their editors are often appointed thanks to institutional affiliations and personal connections, not based on scientific merit. Therefore, these journals tend to lack quality filters that would otherwise prevent acceptance of substandard and grossly deficient inside papers. Third, this study predicts and finds a direct and positive association between editorial board inside publications and inside papers published in the journals, a previously untested hypothesis. Fourth, the study does not rely on random sampling and covers the population of Turkish university journals in Social Sciences. The findings are, therefore, generalisable and represent the entire scholarly publishing arena in Turkey.

The rest of the study is as follows. Sect. "Literature and hypothesis development" briefly summarizes the literature and develops hypothesis. Sect. "Data and methodology" explains data and methodology. Sect. "Results" presents results, and Sect. "Conclusion" concludes.

Literature and hypothesis development

Insider bias is a well-known form of publication bias, where the connection between editor and submitting author may lead to a conflict of interest and provide an external influence on the editorial decision. Scholars are typically discouraged to review works of colleagues affiliated to same institution and with whom they have a conflict of interest (Kempers, 2001; Rockwell, 2006). Early studies point out that editors of top journals may publish invited papers and quality pieces of research from their network in line with the journal vision (Laband & Piette, 1994; Medoff, 2003). Several empirical studies support this argument and provide evidence that authors publish more frequently in journals where one of their colleagues at the same institution is editor, however, without affecting the quality and citations of the publications (Brogaard et al., 2014; Ductor & Visser, 2022). It is even suggested that journal editors may personally invest in their colleagues' papers to improve their quality, rather than outright rejecting or accepting them (Ductor & Visser, 2022). However, part of the editors' job is to reject submissions, without regard to affiliation, and even those from reputed scientists, friends, and colleagues (Harvey, 2013; Ougrin, 2019; Sharma, 2016). Inability to do so could result in editorial favouritism and clientele effect, especially in journals where editor positions are staffed and dominated by a particular institution (Heckman & Moktan, 2020). Eventually, this could lead to publication of substandard articles and harm the journal reputation as well as scientific community. Recent studies provide evidence of editorial favouritism in legal sciences, information sciences, biomedical sciences, and PLOS One (Sarigöl et al., 2017; Scanff et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2021; Yoon, 2013) and argue that lack of editorial resistance to external pressure is mainly responsible for insider bias (Tutuncu et al., 2022). For example, junior editors may not be able to resist favour requests from senior faculty members, who may have the power to affect editors' future career. Conflict of interest is obvious when a fellow faculty member submits to the journal the editor works at. Harvey (2013) suggests that appointing an acting editor and keeping out of the review process is more appropriate in this case. However, editors are institutionally concentrated in Turkish house journals and staying out of the review process is often not an option. Faced with a dilemma between a temporary editorial job and a permanent career, most editors opt for the latter. It is, therefore, not surprising that nearly 30% of publications in Turkish national journals originate from editors' own institutions (Tutuncu, 2023a).

On the other hand, editors are one of the most important people in academia as gatekeepers of science. Therefore, editorial positions, and chief editors in particular, would be expected to be closely guarded by the powerful rent seekers such as rectors, deans, and other influential professors, the so-called academic oligarchs and feudal lords (Horta, 2022; Macfarlane & Jefferson, 2022). Turkish higher education system allows entrenchment of professors due to extensive inbreeding practice in academic recruitment (Karadag & Ciftci, 2022), which is likely to foster insider culture as inbreeding is often associated with unproductive research conduct and parochialism (Altbach et al., 2015; Horta, 2013; Horta et al., 2010). In this setting, many professors become powerful enough to create zones of influence and patronage networks in their respective institutions. As loopholes in promotion regulations allow social scientists to become full professor based on national articles, national journals have an important role in the survival of insider power cliques. Tutuncu and Seeber (2024) document that 70% of Turkish full professors in Business and Economics lack SSCI articles at the time of promotion, demonstrating the importance of national articles for their career. By controlling editorial positions, oligarchs can publish

their own research and grant publication favours to their subordinates to help them meet performance targets, whereby ensuring their own survival (Horta et al., 2022). As chief editors are appointed and dismissed at will by rectors and deans, they are likely to maintain a degree of control over journals and manipulate the editorial process for their benefit. In this setting, editors would either be part of the insider network, or resist them and be dismissed after a short tenure. If editor is not a full professor, he/she could fear reprisals as oligarchs control recruitment and promotion matters at the university. If editor is a full professor, he/she is likely to be one of those who instigate and support insider behaviour. If editors collude with power cliques, they may play a more active part in insider bias through a quid pro quo arrangement. Further, if editors are part of the insider networks and publish by means of their institutional connections, their authority would be challenged and they are less likely to have ethical constraints to reject insider requests for publication. Eventually, the journals would reflect that editors enable and perhaps facilitate publication of inside articles. Exceptions could apply to cases where a university is young and lacks insider culture, and esteemed university journals that have an established research culture (Tutuncu, 2023a). Based on the discussion above, the main and first prediction of the study is as follows:

H1: Editor inside publications and journal inside publications are positively associated.

This hypothesis predicts a board-level pattern as the distribution of board roles is not precisely known, and some of the editors may not be actively involved in journal affairs and serve as figureheads (Lowe & Van Fleet, 2009). Therefore, aggregate number of board publications will be used to test the prediction. At the individual editor level, the study proposes, based on the entrenchment hypothesis (Faleye, 2007; Florackis & Ozkan, 2009; Surroca & Tribo, 2008), that more entrenched editors are more likely to deviate from scientific goals and consequently would be more inclined to publish inside papers. This implies that underrepresented female editors and scholars that received doctorate degrees outside Turkey will be negatively associated with insider bias, while senior editors and professors will be more entrenched and positively associated.

H2: Senior editors and senior professors will be positively associated with inside publications.

H3: Female editors and editors with overseas PhD degrees will be negatively associated with inside publications.

To the knowledge of author, none of these predictions were tested before. Turkish university journals provide an ideal setting to test these hypotheses due to severe conflict of interest between editor and authors, as well as the suitable environment for clientele effect, e.g., preferential submission to affiliated journals and editors. Only 1 of the journals (OLBA) is indexed in SSCI/AHCI, and the remaining 254 journals lack this highest certificate of international recognition. This contrasts with prior research sampled from top journals where quality filters are more likely to prevent inappropriate and substandard submissions from passing the review stage.

Data and methodology

The dataset used in this study is created by merging two sets of editor publications and journal publications data. The articles published by Turkish university journals between 2014 and 2021 were previously collected by the author and used in Tutuncu (2023a). This dataset covers all university journals indexed by the national TR index and published on the

open access Dergipark platform. The data period is determined based on the new academic incentive and promotion regulations that took effect in 2015 and 2016, respectively. These regulations formally encouraged and rewarded national articles, leading to an explosion in their numbers. The sampling period aims to incorporate both of these structural events to construct a homogenous sample of authors with similar motivations. Prior to 2015, journals published considerably fewer articles and going back further in time would lead only to a marginal improvement in sample representation. In its current form, data covers more than 50% of all national articles in Social Sciences. The editor names of these journals are then collected from the latest issues and journal websites. Editors are classified into three groups: Chief editors, deputy or co-editors, and associate or field editors. Although no effort is spared to classify editors correctly, journals may adopt different terminology (Mendonça et al., 2018), and some of the journals may lack a certain type of editor entirely. For example, several journals adopt "editorial assistant" term while others prefer "assistant editor" to refer to co-editors. These are grouped together as the difference in reference is likely not due to different type of editorial work but because of a lack of standard editorial board structure across journals. Moreover, 109 journals do not have deputy or co-editors, and 36 journals do not have field or associate editors. This suggests that journals do not have the same distribution of editorial tasks and one-on-one comparison of editorial boards may not be always possible. Even if there was a standard board structure, one would not know the extent to which an editor is involved in the day-to-day affairs of the journal. Perhaps the nature of submissions would require some editors to become more heavily involved than others. Furthermore, certain editors may have multiple duties. An editor, for example, may act as a co-editor and field editor at the same time and even work for multiple journals (Santos & Mendonça, 2022). I overcome these issues by utilising aggregate measures of productivity as the distribution of editorial tasks is not known.[2] Advisory boards, language editors, technical editors, and journal secretariat are excluded following prior studies. Three journals managed by medical scientists are removed to obtain an unbiased sample of Social Sciences scholars. 49 international editors are also excluded as they are likely to serve as figureheads and cannot exhibit insider behaviour since they are not affiliated to Turkish universities. The final sample includes 255 journals and 2684 editorial board members, 2,313 (86%) of whom are currently employed by the university that publishes the journal. Publication records of the editors are obtained from YÖK Akademik database for Turkish academics (https://akademik.yok.gov.tr/AkademikArama), and faculty websites. This database is official, however, maintained by academics themselves as they submit and update their publication records to apply for funding, academic promotion, and academic incentive scheme. Therefore, data collected through this source comes from academics' own entries. From this data, national articles and inside publications in affiliated journals are identified, counted, and coded. To present a fuller picture of the scale of local insider bias, national articles are broadly defined and includes publications in Turkish journals that are not covered by the official TR index. Book reviews, book chapters, editorials, proceedings, and letters to editor are excluded to cover only peer-reviewed publications (e.g., Bedeian et al., 2008). In the last stage, editor publications and citations are obtained from WOS. There are several challenges in collecting data. For example, many editors do not have a verified WOS profile and their records are mixed with others. Moreover, female academics tend to change last names in case of marriage and divorce, and at times several

[2] I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this limitation.

name combinations need to be used to find the right person. Publications are manually counted to identify index type (ESCI, SSCI/AHCI) and first-authored publications, and to exclude the possibility of infiltration by proceedings and book reviews into the dataset, however, number of citations are used directly as reported by WOS. A few editors in Theology, Psychology and Political Sciences publish more than a dozen book reviews in SSCI journals, but only one or two research articles. These persons are identified, and book reviews are excluded. The data collection is a labour intensive process and each individual's publications are visually inspected to identify the type of article. Despite making his best efforts to correctly identify and count articles, some errors may remain and the author bears responsibility for coding errors. Finally, editor data is supplemented with journals' publication data that contains over 56,000 papers.

Inside publication is defined broadly to account for the effect of institutional affiliations. In this definition, the editor/author is considered an insider if he/she publishes in own journal or in a journal published by the university he/she is affiliated with. This study differs from prior research that examines editorial board members' self-publications in own journals during their editorial tenure. Instead, the entire publication history of editors is considered, and inside papers are identified based on editors' institutional affiliation at the time of publication. Many academics have a strategy of regularly publishing in university journals, including a minority of mobile scientists who change journals in tandem with a change in their affiliation. The changing affiliations of mobile scientists are diligently tracked and matched with their publications. Nationally prolific authors who tend to frequently publish in their privately owned journals are also identified by investigating non-random publication signs in their resume and abnormal, chain publications in those journals. Publications in semi-official journals such as Journal of Human Sciences (Sakarya University), Marife (Necmettin Erbakan University), TEKE (Uludağ University), EKEV (Atatürk University), Ulakbilge and Kalemişi (Akdeniz University) that are founded, staffed, and has become the preferred publication outlet for a specific university academics are also considered as inside publications. However, it is not possible to identify all editorial board memberships and inside publications of the scholars during their academic life. The author does not attempt to investigate publications in all private journals but intends to demonstrate the extent of insider bias. Many journals in the pre-internet era do not exist today and it is not possible to confidently identify all inside papers in nineties and eighties. Moreover, co-author affiliations and editor affiliations in private journals are not investigated for potential inside connections, and informal insider networks cannot be ruled out. Therefore, findings show a highly conservative estimate of the inside publication counts. Including unobservable insider practices, the actual scale of the insider bias would be significantly greater. SSCI papers and number of citations are, however, identified from WOS and provide an official publication record. Data collection was completed in February 2023, and statistics reflect publications up to that date.

Table 1 reports demographics of editors. The journals are grouped by the issuing faculty as most of the board members are selected from there. This results in eight groups of journals: General Social Sciences (GSS) journals are issued by Social Science institutes and publish a mix of everything from theology to finance. GSS covers 42 journals and 541 editorial board members. Education (33 journals, 510 editors), Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (FEAS) journals that publish business, economics, finance and political science papers (49 journals, 421 editors), Faculty of Science and Literature (FEF) journals that publish archaeology, geography, history, linguistics, literature, philosophy, psychology, and sociology papers (57 journals, 420 editors), Theology (37 journals, 461 editors), Law (17 journals, 158 editors), Communication (10

Table 1 Editor demographics: numbers, seniority, gender, and experience

Editor type	All editors	PROF editor	ASCPROF editor	AST-PROF editor	ASTLECT editor	Female editor (%)	Av. Exp. (Years)
All	2684	679	732	715	553	1027 (38)	9.8
Chief editor	331	155	94	68	14	101 (30)	14
Deputy editor	398	18	57	99	224	182 (46)	3.7
Field editor	1955	506	581	548	320	744 (38)	10.3
GSS	541	150	183	154	54	157 (29)	10.5
Education	510	120	206	150	34	267 (52)	10.7
FEAS	421	136	124	104	57	140 (33)	10.8
FEF	420	165	74	104	77	173 (41)	14
Theology	461	44	93	121	203	130 (28)	5
Law	158	20	14	40	84	74 (47)	5.4
Comm	98	28	15	21	34	50 (51)	7.8
Art	75	16	23	21	15	36 (48)	9.8
Research	1165	395	288	268	214	519 (45)	12
Non-research	1519	284	444	447	344	508 (33)	8.1
WOS	399	132	75	98	94	188 (47)	11
NON-WOS	2285	547	657	617	464	839 (37)	9.6

Table reports number of editors. Senior editors are associate and full professors

Experience is calculated as number of years since completion of PhD

Student editor experience is assumed zero

Percentages are calculated relative to the number of editors in each editor type

PROF Full professor, *ASCPROF* Associate professor, *ASTPROF* Assistant professor, *ASTLECT* Research assistant or lecturer, *GSS* General Social Sciences, *FEAS* Faculty of Economics and Administrative Studies, *FEF* Faculty of Science and Literature, *Research* Editors employed at research-focused universities, *WOS* Web of Science indexed journal editor

journals, 98 editors), and Art (10 journals, 75 editors) are other categories. Journals issued by research-focused universities and journals indexed in WOS are examined separately to see their editor profile and publication records. Overall, 53% of all editors and 75% of chief editors are senior academics (full and associate professors), and 38% are female. 21% of editors are research assistant or lecturer. The average experience of an editor is just 9.8 years, calculated as years from PhD degree to 2023. While most journals are staffed by senior academics, Theology and Law journals have a high concentration of junior academics. Out of 287 research assistants and lecturers in these journals, 200 editors handle field editor roles and 2 occupy chief editor position. These two fields also have the most inexperienced editors, with 5 and 5.4 years of average experience respectively. This is a precarious situation from a scientific perspective, as these editors at the beginning of their career are likely to be underqualified for the editorial positions and to assess the scientific value of others' submissions. In addition, junior academics and students may find it difficult to challenge senior researchers and resist publication requests, making journals more vulnerable to outside pressure (Yoon, 2013). 75% of the chief editor positions are taken by senior researchers, who are more likely to have the power to lead the journal. Female editors have the largest representation in Education

(52%) and Communication (51%) journals, while they have the lowest representation in Theology (28%) and GSS (29%) journals, as well as chief editor positions (30%). The overall picture shows that editorial boards are male dominated and women mostly work in lower editorial positions, similar to the boards of Italian (Addis & Villa, 2003) and Spanish (Mauleon et al., 2013) journals. This result is expected as women were underrepresented in Turkish higher education until recently, however, their representation is expected to increase over time.

Number of inside publications, SSCI publications, first-authored WOS publications (FWOS) and number of citations are used to determine scientific productivity of editors. More complex measures that account for co-author contributions such as Lindsey's (1978) Corrected Quality Index, author impact factor (number of citations divided by publications), and Hirsch's (2005) h-index are not used as most of the editors do not have WOS publications and the measures are not applicable. However, the results using count variables are clear enough to inform the readers about editorial productivity.

The following model is estimated to test the predictions at individual editor level (H2, H3):

$$Publications(Inside, SSCI, National, FWOS) = \alpha + Seniority(EditorType, AcademicTitle) + Female + ForeignPhD + GSS + Education + FEAS + FEF + Theo \log y + Law + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Dependent variables Inside, SSCI, National, and FWOS are count variables. Seniority considers two types of seniority: editorial and professorial titles. Chief editor and field editor are dummy variables for editorial seniority. PROF, ASCPROF, and ASTPROF are dummy variables for professorial seniority. The remaining are dummy variables that represent female editors, a variable that represents editors with doctorate degrees from overseas institutions, editors employed at research-focused universities as they are likely to be more productive, and controls for journals' faculty and research discipline. As productivity variables are over dispersed, the standard ordinary least squares estimate is not suitable and models are estimated via negative binomial regression with robust standard errors. Due to large number of zero values in FWOS and SSCI publications (587 editors have zero inside, 1889 editors have zero SSCI article, 1648 editors have zero FWOS, and 217 editors have zero national article), tests are replicated with a zero-inflated negative binomial regression, using natural logarithm of academic experience as inflation factor. Results are similar and only negative binomial model results are reported to maintain consistency across models. Figure 1 shows that editor publications are concentrated in the low productivity clusters.

To compare the publication strategy of editors, number of inside papers are divided by number of SSCI papers to obtain inside-to-SSCI ratio (ISRA). Larger values of ISRA indicate greater tendency to publish using inside connections vis-à-vis publishing international. Therefore, a positive correlation between board ISRA and number of inside papers published by journals is predicted. To include ISRA as a continuous variable in the regressions and exclude the possibility of dividing by zero when there are no SSCI publications, two variations, ISRA1 and ISRA2 are calculated as number of inside papers divided by the sum of inside and SSCI (FWOS) papers. Both measures show the percentage inside publications with respect to all publications and previously used in the literature in similar forms such as the proportion of editor self-publications to all publications in journals (e.g., Mani et al., 2013; Walters et al., 2015; Zdenek, 2018). The model below is used to test the relationship between board insider behaviour and journal inside publications (H1):

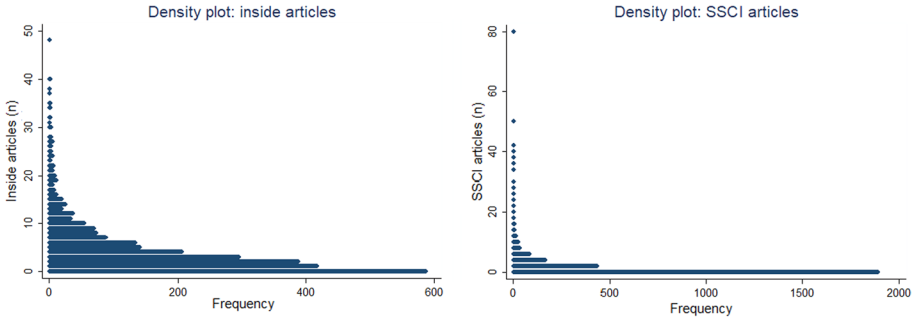

Fig. 1 Density plot for inside and SSCI articles

$$JInsider = \alpha + Publication(BInsider, ISRA1, ISRA2, NASA) + English + Controls + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

JInsider and BInsider are number of inside publications in journals and in editorial boards, the latter is transformed by taking its natural logarithm. ISRA1 (ISRA2) is defined as aggregate board inside publications divided by the sum of aggregate board insider and SSCI (FWOS) publications. Controls include female editor and science discipline dummy variables described in Eq. 1. A positive correlation between JInsider and Publication variables would support the main prediction of the study. An implication of ISRA is that greater international focus would lead to less insider bias. Therefore, we compute an alternative national-to-SSCI article ratio (NASA) to quantify the effect of national vs. international publication behaviour on insider bias. This variable represents research orientation of editors, larger values indicating greater national focus. As insider behaviour is associated with introversion and unproductive academic conduct, a positive association between NASA and journal inside articles is expected.

Results

Table 2 reports summary publication statistics for editors. Editors publish a total of 10,635 inside papers compared to 3065 SSCI papers, the former outscoring the latter by 3.47 to 1. Inside articles constitute 33% of editors' national research output, indicating the importance of inside connections in getting published. The average editor has 3.96 inside, 1.14 SSCI, and 12.1 national publications. The statistics increase in parallel with seniority and experience. Chief editors publish significantly more inside ((t-value = 7.30, $p < 0.001$) and SSCI articles (t-value = 3.86, $p < 0.001$) than deputy and field editors, while professor editors publish more insider (t-value = 25.84, $p < 0.000$) and SSCI papers (t-value = 9.44) than other editors. The comparative publication score ISRA is not significantly different across editorial and professorial titles, and ranges from 2.75 for associate professors to 6.61 for research assistant/lecturer editors, the latter due to the fact that many junior researchers publish their first papers in affiliated journals. Professor editors play an outsized role as their number of inside publications correspond to 51% of all inside papers, while only 25% of the editorial boards are comprised of professors. A similar situation is observed for SSCI articles, of which 49% is published by professors. Figure 2 illustrates the correlation between publications and seniority and summarizes the discussion above. A worrying sign

Table 2 Summary statistics for editor publications

Editor type	Number of inside articles		Number of SSCI articles		Number of national articles		Inside to SSCI Ratio	Inside to National Ratio	National to SSCI Ratio
	All	Mean	All	Mean	All	Mean	ISRA	INNA	NASA
All ($n=2684$)	10,635	3.96	3065	1.14	32,501	12.10	3.47	0.33	10.6
Chief editor ($n=331$)	1914	5.78	589	1.78	5189	15.68	3.25	0.37	8.81
Deputy editor ($n=398$)	778	1.95	197	0.49	2274	5.71	3.95	0.34	11.5
Field editor ($n=1955$)	7943	4.06	2279	1.17	25,038	12.79	3.49	0.32	11
PROF ($n=679$)	5420	7.98	1506	2.22	14,607	21.51	3.60	0.37	9.7
ASCPROF ($n=732$)	3015	4.12	1097	1.50	11,182	15.30	2.75	0.27	10.2
ASTPROF ($n=715$)	1658	2.32	380	0.53	5193	7.25	4.36	0.32	13.6
ASTLECT ($n=553$)	542	0.98	82	0.15	1517	2.74	6.61	0.36	18.5
PhD editor ($n=2330$)	10,435	4.48	3053	1.31	32,033	13.75	3.42	0.33	10.5
Student editor ($n=354$)	200	0.56	12	0.03	468	1.32	16.6	0.43	39
Local PhD ($n=2517$)	10,169	4.04	2591	1.03	30,753	12.21	3.92	0.33	11.9
Foreign PhD ($n=167$)	466	2.79	474	2.84	1748	10.47	0.98	0.27	3.7
Female ($n=1027$)	3304	3.22	1277	1.24	10,379	10.10	2.59	0.32	8.13
Male ($n=1657$)	7331	4.42	1788	1.08	22,122	13.35	4.10	0.33	12.4
GSS ($n=541$)	2313	4.28	555	1.03	7465	13.79	4.17	0.31	13.4
Education ($n=510$)	1702	3.34	1041	2.04	8323	16.32	1.63	0.20	8
FEAS ($n=421$)	1840	4.37	759	1.80	5941	14.11	2.42	0.31	7.83
FEF ($n=420$)	2782	6.62	636	1.51	5443	12.96	4.37	0.51	8.56
Theology ($n=461$)	1084	2.35	26	0.06	2941	6.38	41.7	0.37	113.1
Law ($n=158$)	396	2.51	9	0.06	924	5.85	44	0.43	102.6
Comm ($n=98$)	262	2.67	10	0.10	807	8.23	26.2	0.32	80.7
Art ($n=75$)	256	3.41	29	0.39	657	8.76	8.83	0.39	22.66
Research ($n=1165$)	5569	4.78	1793	1.54	14,798	12.70	3.11	0.38	8.25
Non-research ($n=1519$)	5066	3.34	1272	0.84	17,703	11.65	3.98	0.29	13.92
WOSS ($n=399$)	1611	4.04	446	1.12	4050	10.15	3.61	0.40	9.08
NON-WOSS ($n=2285$)	9024	3.95	2619	1.15	28,451	12.44	3.45	0.32	10.86

Table reports total and mean statistics for editor publications

ISRA number of inside publications divided by number of SSCI publications, *INNA* number of inside articles divided by number of national articles, *NASA* number of national articles divided by number of SSCI articles

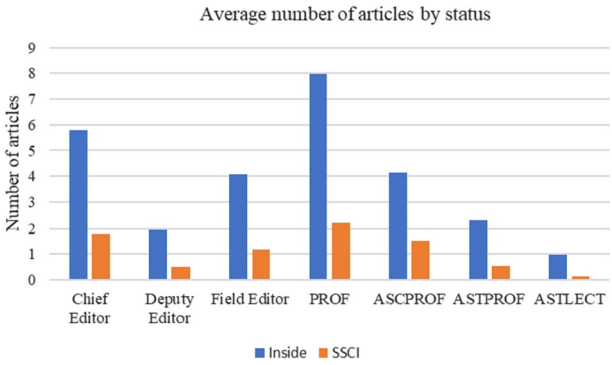

Fig. 2 Average number of articles by academic status

is that student editors and research assistants begin to publish inside papers during their studies. Although their publications are a fraction of the sum, it is likely to set a benchmark for their future publication strategy. The initial results support the argument that professorial and editorial seniority is the source of insider bias, as seniors publish a significantly larger number of inside papers, while juniors who are likely to be advised by senior ones, begin to publish inside papers as early as during their studies. Based on the NASA statistics, a secondary inference could be made about the qualification of editors. The average editor publishes 10.6 times as many national articles as SSCI articles, demonstrating their priorities and lack of universally accepted scientific achievements. The fact that nearly one third of their national articles is based on inside connections only adds insult to injury.

To further examine the entrenchment hypothesis and variations across fields, editors are divided by gender, place of education, and science discipline. Statistics for two underrepresented groups of academics are presented: women editors and editors with an overseas doctoral degree. Male editors publish an average of 4.42 papers per editor, a significantly higher average than female editors' 3.22 papers per editor (t-value = 6.1, $p < 0.000$). Both males and females publish just over 1 SSCI papers per editor, and the differences are not significant ($t = -1.37$). Editors with an overseas PhD perform better than locally educated editors in both categories as they have significantly less insider ($t = -2.82$, $p < 0.01$) and more SSCI publications ($t = 5.54$, $p < 0.000$). Moreover, they are the only editor type that publishes more SSCI than inside papers, with an ISRA of 0.98, while local editor ISRA stands at 3.92. Foreign educated editors are followed by Education journal editors, who publish over one third of all SSCI papers, with an ISRA of just 1.63. The variation across journals is large. FEF, FEAS and GSS editors publish the most inside papers, with averages of 6.6, 4.37, and 4.28 papers, respectively. FEF editors exhibit the strongest insider behaviour papers as 51% of their national articles are in affiliated journals. They are followed by Law (43%), Art (39%), and Theology (37%) editors. Education journal editors have the weakest insider behaviour as only 20% of their national articles have inside connection. These results for editor publications are consistent with the insider bias statistics reported in Tutuncu (2023a) for national journal publications. Here, an insider bias of similar magnitude is documented for editor publications, complementing the overall picture. Editors also publish in SSCI journals, but in a much smaller scale. FEF editors publish 4.37 times, GSS editors 4.17 times and FEAS editors 2.42 times more inside papers than SSCI papers. Theology, Law, Communication, and Art editors do not appear to value publishing in SSCI journals as they make little effort to do so. These four areas have a combined number of 792 editors, comprising 30% of the sample, who publish 1998 inside papers (19%) and just 74 (2.4%) SSCI papers. This corresponds to a combined ISRA of 27. Several scenarios can

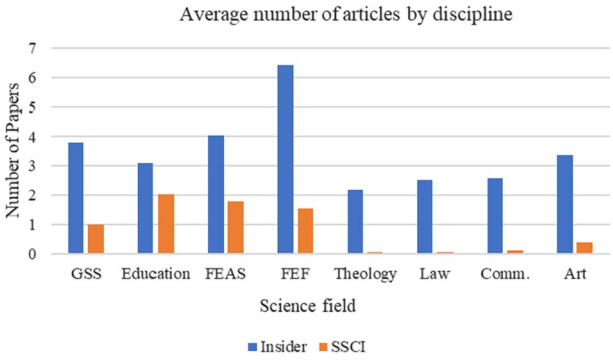

Fig. 3 Average number of articles by journal discipline

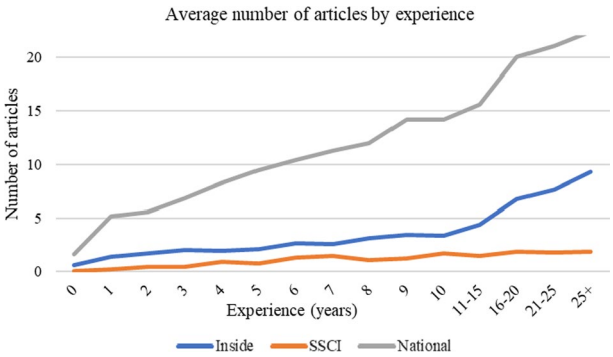

Fig. 4 Average number of articles by experience

be discussed for their inability or reluctance to publish international. First, Theology and Law journals employ a large number of research assistant and student editors, who have not yet published. To understand whether this explains the low productivity, statistics are recalculated for both areas by excluding these junior editors. This yields an average of 3.4 and 4.4 inside publications respectively, and 0.1 SSCI publications for both. The ISRA remains unaffected, invalidating this explanation. Second, one could argue that these areas have few outlets to publish research. According to 2021 Journal Citation Report, 151 journals are indexed in the Religions category of SSCI, 155 in Law, 99 in Communication, and overall, 983 journals are indexed in AHCI. In comparison, 382 Economics, 111 Finance and 155 Business journals are indexed in SSCI. Obviously, editors from these areas have many outlets to publish and the number of outlets is sufficient relative to their size. Therefore, the second explanation is also invalidated. Third, academics in these areas could be affected by different career regulations and this could influence their publication type and journal choice. Yet this explanation is also invalid as only Art scholars are subject to different career regulations. After all, these editors continue to publish in affiliated journals despite a lack of articles in SSCI journals, leading to anomalous ISRA figures up to 41.7 for Theology, 44 for Law, and 26.2 for Communication journal editors. These aberrations could perhaps best be explained by lack of methodological training as well as semi-closed and established hierarchical structures that foster insider culture. Finally, research university journal editors are significantly more productive in insider ($t=7.55$, $p<0.000$) and SSCI ($t=5.27$, $p<0.000$) publications. Editors of WOS indexed journals are not significantly more productive than other journal editors and exhibit the same publication behaviour, e.g.,

Table 3 Number of editors by publication type and citations

Papers (*N*)	Inside	%	SSCI	%	FWOS	%	National	%	Citation	%
0	586	21.8	1889	70.38	1648	61.4	217	8	1859	69.2
1	419	15.6	288	10.73	432	16.1	123	4.5	92	3.4
2	388	14.5	151	5.63	215	8	139	5.2	61	2.3
3	296	11	106	3.95	132	4.9	136	5	52	1.9
4	206	7.7	60	2.24	89	3.3	149	5.5	33	1.2
5	141	5.3	55	2.05	55	2	162	6	30	1.1
6–10	421	15.7	88	3.28	88	3.3	643	24	126	4.7
11–20	179	6.7	29	1.08	22	0.8	664	24.8	102	3.8
21 +	48	1.8	18	0.67	3	0.1	451	16.8	329	12.2

% Column shows the ratio of relevant editors to all 2684 editors

Citations are WOS citations

prioritisation of inside articles and neglect of SSCI articles. This implies that editor selection is not based on merit, and WOS journal editors are not more qualified. Figure 3 illustrates and summarize the discussion above. Figure 4 shows that editors accumulate more inside and national publications over time, while SSCI article growth stops at around 7th year. This could have reasons beyond the scope of this research, such as obtaining tenure and lack of SSCI publications in older faculty. However, it is obvious that the research environment has an enormous local focus and inside articles increase over time in parallel with national articles. Authorities are liable to produce solutions and guidelines to improve the overall publication portfolio of researchers, including quality-focused universal promotion regulations, methodological and ethical training.

Overall, results suggest an overwhelming insider bias in editor publications that permeates nearly every corner of editorial boards. As these statistics are not limited to editorial tenure, but reflect entire publication histories, it is concerning that editors prioritise inside publication to advance their careers, rather than producing high-quality research. ISRA quantifies this effect and shows that insider culture is 3.47 times as strong as SSCI publication culture. This raises questions about the ability of most editors to execute an unbiased review free from conflicts of interest, as well as their eligibility to conduct a scholarly evaluation of submissions, if does not outright incriminate them. Results call for increased transparency about conflicts of interest in editorial review and selection of editors. Currently, selection to editorial board and even chief editor position does not officially require any qualification, and many editorial tasks tend to be relegated to junior academics. At the same time, academic recruitment and promotions require national articles, evaluated by editors who value and prioritise inside connections. Editors must leave their comfort zones if national journals are desired to have worldwide recognition. As a starting point, regulations must enforce clear rules and a lower bound of international productivity to qualify for editor roles.

Table 3 shows number of editors by their number of publications. Statistics in the first row show that only a minority of editors (21.8%), most of which are research assistants and lecturers (52%) and not published before (37%), lack inside publications, while the overwhelming majority of editors lack international publications. Specifically, 70.38% of editors have zero SSCI article, 61.4% have zero FWOS article and 69.3% have zero WOS citation. Alarmingly, 221 (67% of) chief editors also have no SSCI article. A large portion

Table 4 Top insider editors

Name	Inside	SSCI	National	Citation	Affiliation	Title	Role	Field
H. S	48	7	80	16	Ankara	PROF	F.E	Education
T. G	40	9	56	100	Ankara	PROF	F.E	GSS/FEF
N. Y	38	0	50	0	Atatürk	PROF	F.E	GSS
M. Ü	37	0	45	0	Marmara	PROF	C.E	FEF
C. A	35	0	70	0	Uludağ	PROF	F.E	FEF
İ. Ç	34	8	48	219	Ankara	PROF	F.E	GSS/FEF
E. P	32	2	82	57	AKU	PROF	C.E	GSS
Ö. K	32	7	32	51	Hacettepe	PROF	F.E	FEF
F. S	31	9	34	84	Sakarya	PROF	F.E	Education
İ. B	30	2	120	59	KSU	PROF	F.E	GSS
M. S. E	30	0	45	11	Ankara HBV	PROF	F.E	FEF
F. G	30	0	40	0	İstanbul	PROF	C.E	FEF
K. G	28	0	36	0	AKU	PROF	F.E	GSS
M. A	28	0	64	8	Ankara HBV	PROF	C.E	FEAS
M. A	28	2	44	2	Pamukkale	PROF	C.E	FEF
N. G	27	0	41	0	Marmara	PROF	F.E	FEAS
A. İ. Ç	27	5	37	8	Başkent	PROF	F.E	FEAS
M. S	27	9	34	156	Ankara	PROF	F.E	FEF
E. M. Ö	27	3	44	11	Ankara	PROF	F.E	FEF
B. G	27	1	40	0	ESOGU	PROF	F.E	FEF
M. Z	26	0	48	4	Selçuk	PROF	F.E	GSS
A. S	26	3	29	40	Selçuk	PROF	C.E	FEF
S. K. K	26	0	28	0	Ankara	PROF	C.E	FEF
Total	714	67	1147	826	ISRA: 10.6	INNA: 0.62 NASA: 17.1		

Table reports editors with over 25 inside articles, their number of publications and citations

C.E. Chief editor, *F.E.* Field editor

of editors frequently publish using the insider route, indicating prioritisation of inside connections over international journals. While 789 (29.4%) editors publish 5 and more inside articles, only 190 (7%) have 5 and more SSCI articles, indicating the prevalence of insider behaviour and lack of a publication strategy centred on research quality. Given the fact that SSCI articles are often authored by multiple researchers, FWOS statistics are reported to account for individual author contributions and eliminate multiple counting problem. There are 2905 FWOS papers, a statistic that includes articles in ESCI indexed journals. Including 2312 ESCI papers, editors publish a total of 5377 WOS articles, of which 2905 (54%) are first-authored. The results should be interpreted in the light of this calculation. Unreported in Table 3, 53.2% of editors have no WOS articles at all and 53.1% of editors publish inside paper without publishing any SSCI article. Overall, it is disappointing that the majority of editors have not published a single international paper and have not been cited once, underlining the overall lack of qualification in editorial boards.

Table 4 and 5 show the most prolific insider and SSCI publishing editors. All top insiders are full professors. FEF journals provide more than half of top insiders, and 7 of them are chief editors. Overall, they have 714 inside papers compared to just 67 SSCI papers, leading to an ISRA of 10.6. Moreover, 62% of the national articles by top insiders are

Table 5 Top SSCI editors

Name	Inside	SSCI	National	Citation	Affiliation	Title	Role	Field
T. G	6	80	6	1928	ODTÜ	PROF	C.E	FEF
F. B	2	50	5	2312	Erciyes	PROF	C.E	FEAS
C. I	5	41	35	1800	Anadolu	ASCPROF	C.E	FEAS
H. Y. D	5	40	31	493	N. Erbakan	ASCPROF	F.E	Education
T. D	1	37	4	1172	Akdeniz	PROF	F.E	FEF
R. U	1	36	7	2995	Erciyes	ASCPROF	F.E	FEAS
D. Ç	2	34	6	472	Gazi	PROF	F.E	Education
M. A. D	2	30	11	2281	Gaziantep	ASCPROF	F.E	GSS
M. İ	0	30	5	330	Hacettepe	PROF	F.E	FEF
N. B. A	16	27	43	1134	Uludağ	PROF	F.E	FEF
M. B	7	26	15	471	Pamukkale	PROF	C.E	Education
E. K	0	26	7	2164	Erciyes	ASCPROF	F.E	FEAS
M. S.,	8	24	25	470	Gazi	PROF	C.E	Education
H. S	0	24	10	218	Mardin	ASCPROF	F.E	GSS
A. A	11	23	12	2713	HMKU	PROF	F.E	GSS
A. N. Ç	3	23	6	210	Ege	PROF	C.E	FEAS
H. E	10	22	110	99	Marmara	PROF	F.E	Education
C. K	1	22	5	275	Harran	ASCPROF	F.E	GSS
A. G	2	20	7	766	Düzce	PROF	F.E	GSS
S. M. C	1	18	5	328	Hacettepe	PROF	D.E	FEAS
G. K	6	17	6	307	İstanbul	PROF	C.E	FEAS
F. Y	2	17	6	99	Atatürk	ASCPROF	F.E	Art
F. E	2	16	7	315	Ankara HBV	PROF	F.E	FEAS
Total	93	683	374	23,352	ISRA: 0.13	INNA: 0.25 NASA: 0.55		

Table reports editors with over 15 SSCI articles, their number of publications and citations

C.E. Chief editor, *D.E.* Deputy editor, *F.E.* Field editor

published using inside connections, while their national output is 17.1 times their SSCI output. Top SSCI editors are more diverse, FEAS and Education journals leading the list. Overall, they publish 93 inside papers and 683 SSCI articles, leading to an ISRA of just 0.13. Their international focus is evident as they publish nearly twice as many SSCI papers as national papers. Energy Economics, Psychology and Education are the most popular areas for top scholars. However, it is worth noting that many publications of this kind are a product of collaborative work, and the figures may not reflect the individual contribution of the authors. For example, Tülin Gençöz, who leads the list with 80 SSCI articles, is the lead author in only 11. In terms of lead authored SSCI articles, Faik Bilgili leads the list with 35 articles. Either way, these elite scholars know the tribulations of producing a high-quality piece of research and publishing in top journals. Therefore, they are more likely to be qualified for editorial positions.

Next, multivariate regressions defined in Eq. 1 and Eq. 2 are estimated at individual editor level ($n = 2684$), at chief editor level ($n = 331$) and at journal level ($n = 255$) to verify findings and formally test the hypotheses. Table 6 reports individual editor regressions. Overall, four models, each with two different specifications are estimated, resulting in eight model combinations. Each of the four models utilises a different

Table 6 Determinants of editor publications

Variable	Insider model1	Insider model2	SSCI model1	SSCI model2	National model1	National model2	FWOS model1	FWOS model2
Chief editor	0.978***		1.137***		0.949***		0.757***	
	[10.80]		[4.70]		[13.43]		[5.39]	
Field editor	0.681***		0.788***		0.694***		0.442***	
	[8.80]		[4.95]		[11.43]		[3.80]	
PROF		2.055***		2.056***		1.92***		2.056***
		[26.20]		[9.71]		[30.25]		[9.71]
ASCPROF		1.496***		1.78***		1.57***		1.78***
		[19.20]		[8.24]		[26.02]		[8.24]
ASTPROF		0.892***		0.826***		0.896***		0.826***
		[11.51]		[3.92]		[14.82]		[3.92]
Female	− 0.35***	− 0.12***	0.031	0.198*	− 0.36***	− 0.14***	− 0.122	0.198*
	[− 7.39]	[− 2.76]	[0.26]	[1.73]	[− 9.75]	[− 4.43]	[− 1.59]	[1.73]
ForeignPhD	− 0.46***	− 0.64***	1.049***	0.976***	− 0.21**	− 0.38***	0.817***	0.976***
	[− 3.67]	[− 6.23]	[5.13]	[5.11]	[− 2.06]	[− 4.63]	[6.23]	[5.11]
Research	0.31***	0.088**	0.675***	0.586***	0.186***	− 0.01	0.448***	0.586***
	[6.31]	[2.06]	[5.95]	[5.19]	[4.85]	[− 0.33]	[5.80]	[5.19]
GSS	0.292***	0.202***	1.637***	1.624***	0.356***	0.272***	0.944***	1.62***
	[3.08]	[2.35]	[3.66]	[3.74]	[4.52]	[4.00]	[3.59]	[3.74]
Education	0.082	− 0.018	2.24***	2.15***	0.585***	0.476***	1.66***	2.15***
	[0.87]	[− 0.20]	[5.23]	[5.15]	[7.44]	[6.86]	[6.61]	[5.15]
FEAS	0.306***	0.236**	1.997***	1.941***	0.386***	0.346***	1.272***	1.94***
	[3.29]	[2.67]	[4.58]	[4.45]	[4.90]	[4.80]	[4.92]	[4.45]
FEF	0.616***	0.653***	1.556***	1.474***	0.242***	0.298***	0.989***	1.474***
	[6.73]	[7.60]	[3.46]	[3.40]	[3.08]	[4.20]	[3.82]	[3.40]
Theology	− 0.38***	0.036	− 1.42***	− 1.01**	− 0.47***	− 0.067	0.089	− 1.01**
	[− 3.77]	[0.41]	[− 2.76]	[− 1.98]	[− 5.77]	[− 0.97]	[0.33]	[− 1.98]
Law	− 0.106	0.247**	− 1.384**	− 0.986	− 0.38***	− 0.079	− 0.463	− 0.985

Table 6 (continued)

Variable	Insider model1	Insider model2	SSCI model1	SSCI model2	National model1	National model2	FWOS model1	FWOS model2
	[− 0.90]	[2.40]	[− 2.07]	[− 1.51]	[− 3.57]	[− 0.93]	[− 1.51]	[− 1.51]
Constant	0.524***	− 0.226**	− 2.66***	− 3.44***	1.65***	0.93***	− 1.63***	− 3.44***
	[5.20]	[− 2.21]	[− 6.37]	[− 7.96]	[19.56]	[11.14]	[− 6.32]	[− 7.96]
Log likel	− 6443.75	− 6023.36	− 3049.85	− 2970.8	− 9158.47	− 8562.82	− 3481.9	− 2970.83
χ^2	425.96	1463.79	396.91	552.36	637.4	1986.59	361.91	552.36
N	2684	2684	2684	2684	2684	2684	2684	2684

Table reports negative binomial regressions with robust standard errors. Variables are defined in Table 1 and in the text

Dependent variables are number of inside papers, SSCI papers, national papers, and FWOS papers. z-statistics are reported in brackets

***, **, *represent statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%

Table 7 Journal summary statistics ($N=255$)

Variable	Mean	Median	Min	Max
Insider ratio (%)	29	26.4	0	73
Journal papers	221	176	19	1221
Journal inside papers	62	48	0	474
Board inside papers	41.85	28	0	285
Board SSCI papers	12.06	3	0	128
Board FWOS papers	9.09	5	0	122
Board national papers	127.8	82	4	863
ISRA1	0.81	0.89	0	1
ISRA2	0.78	0.82	0	1
INNA	0.36	0.32	0	0.92
NASA	0.92	0.96	0.34	1
Board citations	212	11	0	8031
Board size	10.5	9	1	50
Board experience	102.9	79	2	650
Female editor ratio (%)	37.2	35.3	0	100

Insider ratio is journal inside papers divided by all papers published in the journal in the sampling period (Tutuncu, 2023a). Board experience is editorial board's total experience. ISRA1 is defined as number of inside papers divided by the sum of inside and SSCI papers, following Tutuncu (2023b). ISRA2 is defined as number of inside papers divided by sum of inside and FWOS papers. INNA is defined as number of inside articles divided by all national articles. NASA is defined as number of national articles divided by the sum of national and SSCI articles.

productivity measure as dependent variable (Insider, SSCI, National, FWOS), and each specification uses a different set of seniority measures (editorial seniority, professorial seniority) as the main independent variables. Female, Foreign PhD, Research (dummy for editors employed at research-focused universities) variables and field controls (GSS, Education, FEAS, FEF, Theology, Law) represent the baseline model. Results show that all types of seniority is associated with larger productivity in terms of publications and citations. However, the importance of seniority varies across models. For example, seniority variables are the most important factors in Insider models and have the largest coefficients in all specifications: 0.995 for chief editor, 0.715 for field editor, 2.084 for PROF, 1.529 for ASCPROF, and 0.908 for ASTPROF. FEF has the largest impact on inside publications among all fields. Seniority takes a backseat in SSCI models as field variations exert significant influence on SSCI productivity. Parameters suggest that Education is the most important factor in SSCI productivity, followed by PROF, FEAS, ASCPROF, FEF, and Foreign PhD editors. Theology and Law fields are inversely associated with SSCI productivity, supporting prior findings that these editors have little international publication experience. Female editors are negatively associated with inside and overall national productivity; however, they appear to have weak or no impact on SSCI publications. FWOS model yields similar results and reported for robustness purposes. Overall, tests strongly support the predictions in H2 and H3 that senior editors and professors publish more inside papers, while female editors and editors with overseas doctoral degrees are negatively associated with insider bias. Results

remain identical when tests are repeated by excluding editors with no academic experience ($n = 2285$ observations), using citations as dependent variable and replacing editorial and academic seniority variables with the academic experience (number of years since PhD) variable.

Table 7 reports descriptive statistics for journals and their boards. Journals publish an average of 221 papers, of which 62 belong to insider authors, leading to an average 29% insider ratio across journals. The average journal editorial board publishes nearly 42 inside papers, 12 SSCI and 128 FWOS papers. The proportion of inside papers to all publications (ISRA1) is 0.81. This would indicate that the average journal board has a portfolio consisting 81% of inside papers, and 19% of SSCI papers. With an average of 36% INNA and 92% NASA, the journals also have a locally oriented editorial board, which in turn heavily rely on inside connections to publish. The average board has 10.5 editors, 37.2% of which are females, and has 212 WOS citations. While only 1 journal board has zero inside publication, 73 (28.6%) of boards have zero SSCI publication and 76 (30%) boards have zero citation. Overall, findings are in line with previous results, as they repeatedly show that inside publications are at least 3 times more than SSCI ones across both individual and board level. Although the strength of insider bias may vary across boards, it is evident that the bias is present and widespread.

There are few exceptions where insider culture does not appear to permeate the journal or the board. Two examples will be discussed here to shed light on this issue. Kilikya Felsefe Dergisi (KFD, 0 inside article in the journal, 0% insider ratio, 1 editor inside paper), and Hacettepe Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi (HHFD, 38 inside articles in the journal and 22.6% insider ratio, 0 editor inside paper). Journals are from non-competitive Philosophy and Law fields and publish only two issues a year. Their editors are well-educated and young. KFD's chief editor is an ODTÜ-educated (a research-intensive technical university) associate professor and worked at several universities. He is one of the five chief editors who are not affiliated to the journal's owner. Other journals managed by the four unaffiliated editors have similarly low insider ratios (Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies: 11% insider ratio, İnönü Law Journal: 9%, Kaygı Philosophy Journal: 14%, Musicologist: 10%). These ratios are considerably lower than 30% average insider ratio for Turkish national journals. KFD is also published by Mersin University, which appears to have weak insider culture. Table 3 in Tutuncu (2023a) shows that Mersin University journals collectively have just 10.6% insider ratio, one of the weakest among all universities. HHFD's chief editor is a German-educated female assistant professor. Remaining editors are graduate students. Total board experience is just 9 and 2 years, respectively. Insider behaviour is very weak in both journal boards. We speculate that editors' background, mobility, and juniority are reasons behind the lack of insider behaviour on board. HHFD, on the other hand, has the disadvantage of being in the Law field, where insider bias is one of the strongest (Tutuncu, 2023a). HHFD's insider ratio is the third lowest among 17 Law journals in the sample, indicating a degree of editorial resistance to insider culture. Moreover, owner of the journal, Hacettepe University, is an esteemed research-focused institution that is known for taking the first formal action against predatory publishing in Turkey. Therefore, its academic staff could be more research-conscious and insider behaviour could be weaker. Recently, editorial board of Uluslararası Yönetim İktisat ve İşletme Dergisi, a well-regarded national journal in Business and Economics, resigned following insider pressure from above. The journal had an insider ratio of just 11% and acceptance rate of 22%, both some of the lowest rates in Turkish national journals (see Tutuncu, 2023a, 2023b). Two of the journal's co-editors were foreign-educated and the board was known

Table 8 Determinants of chief editor and journal publications

	C. editor insider	C. editor SSCI	Journal model1	Journal model2	Journal model3	Journal model4	Journal model5
PROF	1.305***	2.53**					
	[6.22]	[2.45]					
ASCPROF	0.687***	1.81*					
	[3.03]	[1.89]					
ASTPROF	0.062	1.31					
	[0.28]	[1.20]					
ForeignPhD	− 0.604***	0.48**					
	[− 2.89]	[2.19]					
BInsider			0.181***	0.275***			
			[3.89]	[3.04]			
ISRA1					0.771***		
					[3.50]		
ISRA2						0.861***	
						[3.58]	
NASA							0.852**
							[2.23]
English			− 1.22***	− 1.32***	− 1.66***	− 1.154***	− 1.19**
			[− 3.24]	[− 3.88]	[− 3.28]	(− 3.34)	[− 3.24]
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.533*	− 3.22***	3.17***	3.35***	2.94***	2.91***	2.85***
	[1.87]	[− 2.69]	[13.72]	[16.50]	[8.94]	[9.43]	[5.95]
Log likel	− 853.35	− 438.63	− 1259.97	− 1262.19	− 1262.22	− 1261.55	− 1264.77
χ^2	183.21	83.63	84.39	85.37	84.98	85.9	76.43
N	331	331	255	255	255	255	255

Dependent variable in chief editor regressions (first two columns): Number of inside and SSCI articles. Journal regressions in the last five columns use number of inside papers published in the journal as dependent variable. BInsider is the sum of inside papers published by the editorial board members, first used in the logarithmic form and then in normalised form. Journal1 model uses logarithmically transformed variable and Journal model2 uses the variable normalised by board size. ISRA1 (ISRA2) is defined as the ratio of editorial boards' inside papers to the sum of inside and SSCI (FWOS) papers. NASA is defined as board national articles divided by the sum of board national and SSCI articles. z-statistics are reported in parentheses. Controls include gender and field dummies

***, **, *Represent statistical significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%

to reject insider requests during their tenure. This event demonstrates the importance of editorial independence and how far editors can resist favouritism without it.

Table 8 reports regression results for chief editors and journals. An abridged table is reported to focus on main results. Full and associate professors have a highly significant relationship with inside publications, while their relationship with SSCI publications is weaker. This suggests that chief editor publication priorities lie with local inside publications rather than international ones. Interestingly, assistant professors are not significantly associated with either productivity. To investigate this point, we calculate experience and productivity statistics of chief editors and find that ASTPROF chief editors only have 6 years of average experience compared to 16 years for the rest of the chief editors, leading to lower productivity in both terms. However, their publication behaviour remains staunchly insider as 81% of them have inside papers compared to 15% that published a SSCI article. Finally, three specifications of journal level regression are reported with an added dummy variable for English publications which could affect the choice of journal and insider behaviour (Kurt, 2018; Tutuncu et al., 2022). As predicted in H1, the number of board inside papers, ISRA1 and ISRA2 are all positively associated with the number of inside papers published in the journal. Findings are significant and strong enough to conclude that boards' approach to inside publication behaviour is correlated with the number of inside papers published in the journal. A concern could be raised about outlier editors. For example, a highly productive researcher could take aggregate publications to an extreme level, so that it would not represent the average editor anymore. To overcome this issue, we utilize normalised board publications in Journal Model 2, calculated as the aggregate board insider publications divided by board size. The results remain unchanged. An implication of ISRA is that more internationally oriented boards are less likely to permit inside articles. We examine this prediction using board NASA variable in Journal Model 5 and find supporting results. A secondary concern could be that editorial boards are selected from the most recent issue and may not reflect the long-term board composition. This study argues that editorial boards reflect the research culture of the associated university and faculty, and the boards' composition will remain similar while editors may change over time. Therefore, the outcome is largely independent of minor changes in board members, but the overall board composition and approach is more relevant.

Conclusion

This study examines whether editors are part of the 'insider culture' or victims of the insider pressure. It predicts that editors publishing by means of inside connections would facilitate inside publications in journals under their management, and a causal relationship between the two could be observed. Data from 255 journals and 2684 editors are used to create four measures of editor productivity: Number of inside articles, SSCI articles, first-authored WOS articles, and number of WOS citations. Using these variables, the inside-to-SSCI ratio (ISRA) is constructed to observe publication strategy of editorial boards. Results strongly suggest that editors are part of the insider culture, publish nearly a third of their national papers by means of inside connections, and facilitate publications of their colleagues at the same institution. Results not only raise questions about their editorial conduct but cast shadow on their eligibility to manage journals as around 70% of editors have zero SSCI publication and WOS citation. This indicates a larger academic qualification

problem than the well-known self-publication issue and a serious defect in the editor selection process of national journals.

This study adopted a broader approach to editorial nepotism. Prior work considered unidimensional nepotism such as editor self-publications, co-author publications, and inside publications in journals. This work complements the relevant literature by a merging editor and journal dimensions. This allows making broader inferences about the influence of editorial behaviour on journal publication policies. Therefore, the study offers tangible evidence and recommendations to improve national editorial boards and publication practices. University journal editors are typically appointed by rectors and deans, who are separately listed on journal websites as owners although they are rarely involved with journals' daily affairs. Despite delegating authority to chief editors, they maintain control over journals through selective editor appointments as they are able to dismiss editors at will. This study argued that non-meritocratic editor selection and undiversified structure of editorial boards create clientele effect (Heckman & Moktan, 2020), threatening the credibility of scientific research (Bedeian et al., 2008) and leading to entrenchment of insider culture and favouritism. As most editors are sourced from the institutions that publish the journals, Turkish university journals provide an excellent environment to test this clientele effect. In this setting, editors may exercise their power to publish their own research and grant favours to their acquaintances, without regard to research quality. To that aim, they may manipulate the review system, fast-track certain submissions or appoint non-blind reviewers such as co-authors and friends of the submitting author. These practices could lead to empowerment of a certain group of professors, who concentrate power in their hands to form a privileged class of academic oligarchs (Horta, 2022; Macfarlane & Jefferson, 2022) at the expense of scientific rigour. To protect and expand their zone of influence, these oligarchs could use the system to their advantage, recruit and promote individuals in their networks. Academic journals play a crucial role in this system as everyone needs to publish to be promoted. Therefore, a primary aim of the academic oligarchy would be to occupy and expropriate editorial positions so that journals serve their interests. Absent rules that regulate editor appointments and editorial independence, academic oligarchs such as rectors and deans could simply appoint and remove editors at their whim.

Turkish authorities place a special emphasis on national journals to strengthen a national alternative to the global indexes. As robust editorial conduct is vital to the research integrity and journal development, following policy recommendations can be made to mitigate insider bias and improve publication practices: i) To prevent abuse of journals and editorial power, regulations need to prohibit inside articles and encourage international articles for promotion. Lacking inside connections to publish in international journals, social scientists would need to invest time and effort in research to produce high-quality publications. Promotion regulations favouring national articles enable continuation of the status quo as a social scientist can rise to full professor without publishing a single international paper, ii) Authorities should enforce a minimum number of international articles to qualify for editorial positions. This would empower highly skilled researchers and prevent infiltration of low-skilled academics into editorial boards, disrupting academic oligarchs' power networks, iii) Authorities should implement rules to improve transparency in the review process. Several journals such as Nature, European Journal of Higher Education, and Quantitative Science Studies publish review reports along with articles (Nature, 2020; Seeber et al., 2023). This model could be trialled and encouraged by the national index to prevent abuse of the review process, iv) Most of the journals and editors operate

without official editor roles and work rules. As most of the editors are sourced from the same institution, many fear backlash and reprisals in the workplace if they do not comply with favour requests. To ensure editorial independence, institutional diversity of editors should be observed and qualified editors should be appointed with fixed-term contracts instead of verbal instructions from the top. This would give editors a formal position with authority, mitigate insider pressure and prevent their casual dismissal, v) Journals need to be monitored for questionable academic practices such as fast-tracking certain submissions. A minimum time period can be enforced by the national index for accepting papers to prevent insider behaviour, as the primary aim of insiders is rapid publication (Tutuncu, 2023a), vi) National journals should be supported to seek indexing in WOS and Scopus. International indices may provide an additional layer of protection from insider bias as editors would need to maintain higher research standards and may resist favour requests from locals. Overall, national journals require serious investment and reorganization. Empowering highly skilled researchers and increasing editorial transparency are paramount to mitigate favouritism and raise their status.

The study can be extended in several ways. First, editor self-publications could be separately investigated. Second, other disciplines such as medical sciences and natural sciences stipulate publishing in high-impact journals and an extension could investigate whether different career regulations in these areas lead to different results. Third, only WOS measures of productivity are used in this research. An extension using Scopus data could offer useful insights. Fourth, this research relies on whole counting and first-authored papers to define individual productivity. This results in multiple counting issue in co-authored papers and overestimation of author contributions in many instances. Using fractional counting and corresponding authors as productivity measures could solve this issue and provide important insights into relative contributions of the authors. A significant limitation of the study is that only formal inside connections are identified. However, a considerable number of publications rely on informal connections. For example, researchers often publish articles in private journals edited by their friends and in neighbouring universities' journals, where publication requests tend to be tolerated. Therefore, this study may be only scratching the surface of insider networks. Further studies may investigate cross-publishing schemes and co-author connections to shed more light on insider bias. Finally, chief editors may be examined separately as they typically determine journal policies and appoint other editorial board members. Their qualification and publication behaviour would provide deeper insights and guidance to develop higher education policies.

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Code availability Not applicable. The analysis is performed in Stata software.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval Not applicable as the research does not involve human or animal subjects.

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