

Academic Research in Business Plagued by ICvirus – Needs Action: A Critical Thought

Randheer Kokku

College of Business Administration, King Saud University

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Abstract- The aim is to perform “antahkarana-shuddhi” Sanskrit word, means cleanse the inner self with reference to academic research in business(ARB) in this study. Intellectual capital virus termed as “ICvirus” has plagued ARB over a period of last five decades. “ICvirus” has distanced ARB from its stakeholders. Practicing managers are one of the main stakeholders with whom ARB completely lost the track and even with other stakeholders. ARB does not involve executives from practicing world in its activities who are main consumers of ARB output. This paper tries to throw light on the factors which are prolonging the “ICvirus” and also brings out suggestions-actions to treat this endemic.

Index Terms- Academic Research in Business, Intellectual Capital Virus, Stakeholders, Practicing Managers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Need for this study started with longitudinal observation of intellectual capital virus termed as “ICvirus” and neglect of introspection by academic research in business(ARB). Faculty members and institutions are aware of these issues, but are not outspoken about it due to self-interests. Prolonging these issues may severely damage the ARB ecosystem, hence this study took initiative to speak on it with an objective to discuss factors effecting ARB and actions to treat it.

ICvirus is intellectual capital virus affecting ARB. Symptoms of ICvirus are journals and authors going craze for impact factor, involve in false pride by distancing from practicing world, weak data collection, believes in presenting things in complex form, practices self-production and consumption of knowledge. The true spirit of investigative research is missing and the truth to enlightening the world with results and benefits of ARB is a distant dream. Most of research works of ARB are not probing problems which are real-time, output of such research is not useful to practicing world and to general world.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW – FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS(ARB)

Research impact or impact factor

Impact of academic research in business (ARB) on stakeholders is less. ARB’s impact is loosely studied topic. Limited literature stressed on need for academic research to be done jointly with industry practitioners (McCabe, Osegowitsch, Parker, and Cox, 2021); government decision makers (Harzing, 2005); students; and financial institutions. A study by McCabe et al., (2021) had investigated knowledge co-production by academia with practitioners, they also identified power gap within both limiting their collaboration. Business schools have an important role to bridge the gap by promoting ARB aggressively to be in line with contemporary industry practices. Harzing (2005) found, university level research funding by government declined drastically in last few decades including ARB, the major reason being overall low impact of academic research on society. Higher education institutions are racing for impact factor without giving a thought for research impact on

stakeholders. Taylor and Bradbury (2011) had discussed factors of impact assessment such as business, economic, social, quality of life, public policy & services, environment, cultural and health. Ozanne et al (2017) specifically recommends social impact of academic research. These factors can be tailored to ARB as business practices, public policy and services, business environment, work culture, financial health, quality of work life, business economics, corporate social responsibility and other related factors.

False pride of Academic community in business research

ARB fraternity is intoxicated by false pride of imagination. Academic members are working in a horizon of axis with false pride as centripetal force. False pride is driven by isolated research. Majority of ARB topics are thought useful to practioners, but in reality practioners are not aware of happenings in ARB world. Majority of practioners do not know about research articles, bitter truth is they don't even know the names of journals. The gap is due to academic fraternity working in its own world, they believe their research is superior, are on cloud nine, and think their work is worth to be considered by managerial world, resulting in ARB turned to bubble, swift action is needed before it bursts.

Circular trading of knowledge and snowball reference

According to Investopedia the definition of circular trading "Circular trading is a fraudulent scheme where sell orders are entered by a broker who knows that offsetting buy orders for the exact same number of shares at the same time and, at the same price, have either been or will be entered". This definition applied to academic research explains research publications in business are majorly published and read by academicians themselves resulting in self-production and consumption. This is a peculiar situation where manufacturer himself is the customer resulting in boundaries of ARB limiting to teaching fraternity.

In order to curtail plagiarism, academic world has practice of referencing works of each other's giving the credit to original author. ARB practices snowball referencing in two ways, firstly the author refers his past research works in the present work and this continues as a snowball. Secondly the author refers papers from the target journal to satisfy the editor, reality is most of the editors prefer this. As more business schools joined the market with intellectual contribution as major component in faculty member promotion, it forced them to publish more numbers, there are some extreme cases where individual faculty members are publishing tens to hundreds of papers in a particular academic year, they have become production machines leading to downgraded quality.

Complex analysis and Readability

One of the good reasons for low reachability of academic research output among stakeholders is readability of complex analysis and results presentation in research papers from SPSS, AMOS, PLS, SEM, and SAS results. Research papers are not only with complex analysis, write-up is with complicated jargon. Practicing managers are busy in work-life, they do not have spare time for reading such jargon, and it makes worse to read content which is difficulty to read and hard to digest. This discussion has no ire for complex analysis, but a mechanism of simple presentation needs to be designed giving opportunity for the stakeholder to read and understand with ease. Academic world in business studies should understand practicing world is a pressure cooker, hence a way needs to be fished out to present research work in a simple and easy to understand method. Norreklit, Norreklit, and Mitchell (2016) also suggest ARB presentation does not match the managers generalization of research output understanding, which created gap between them and ARB.

Publishing shops

Echo system of ABR created desperation among academic teachers, faculty members, researchers for mandatory publishing to survive in teaching profession. To cash this desperation numerous publishing houses have mushroomed with publication shops. Journals and related publication shops have become demons who reject and deject authors. Publication shops cartelized the business with self-declared criteria to rank and categorize journals to be good, bad, predatory, low quality and

so on. When measured in terms of stakeholder’s usability, published output of publication shops has a big zero contribution. These publication shops are doing all types of ill practices starting with taking pride in desk rejection, passing illogical recommendations, killing the researchers time, gestation of 6 months and in some cases two years and upward.

Additionally, they gave birth to lollipop stores like language editing services, publication guarantee services, special edition through conferences, publication training services and many more, kindly see the pictures at the end. In figure 1, a service named “Web of Publishing” is giving guarantee to authors to provide complete end-to-end publishing services, where authors role is to pay them, rest they will take care, means they will write and publish research papers on behalf of authors in Q1 & Q2 journals, this is the level of stooping academic research in business has reached, it reached to the seabed, further there is no way to go down, only it needs to be buried. Reach of this advertisement is email box of faculty members of all business schools, why no action is taken on Web of Publishing by editors of Q1, Q2, ABCD, Scopus or some other self-proclaimed champions of research publications, it smells their involvement. In figure 2 and 3, a service named “Premium Academic” is wooing research article authors to increase the number of citations for their published articles. If an author pays them, his article will be pushed artificially to other authors to cite it, it’s a kind of organized mass scale circular trading. In figure 4, it’s another advertisement by a lollipop offering paid services for authors to re-write their articles/manuscript and also other services. Their USP is to higherup chances of research work acceptance by journals. These advertisements clearly establish working relationship between editors, journals, publishing shops and lollipops, they are all part of same filth. Research which was ideally to be practiced as passion has become a business model with aggressive marketing activities like flooding teaching fraternity with emails to publish with them and business schools have become blind followers.

Figure 1 : Web of Publishing is a paid service promises guaranteed complete services for publishing in Q1 &Q2 Journals.

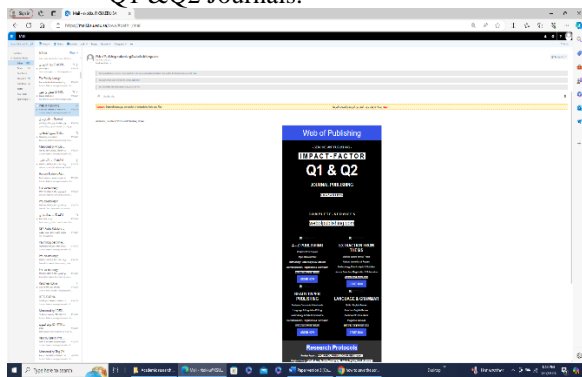


Figure 2 and 3 : Premium Academic is a paid service promises to increase the rate of citation to an author’s publication.

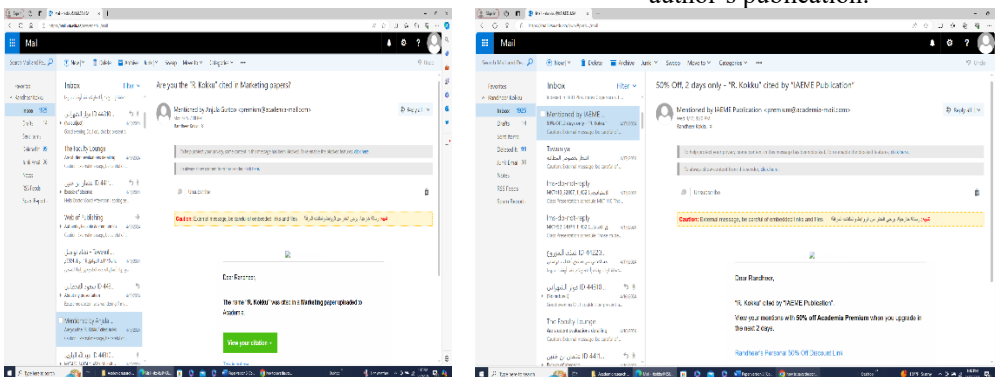
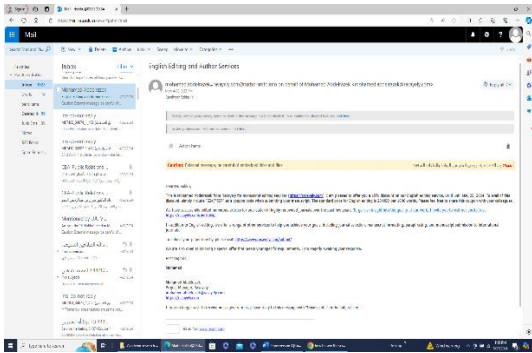


Figure 4 : Manuscript and Author services is a paid service promising to put the article in a polished language and to meet the other criteria suitable to journal, overall it will increase the chances of publication.



III. SUGGESTIONS-ACTIONS NEEDED BY ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS(ARB)

This section brings important ways of addressing ICvirus. Business schools, faculty members, research scholars, funding agencies, publication houses, journal editors have to realize this early to put ARB in right track.

Connecting stakeholders

Members who directly or indirectly connect to business are stakeholders of ARB, the most important stakeholder is practicing managers. The output of intellectual activities at business school are aimed at corporate decision makers, some day they may refer to this output enabling their decisions. Ironically majority of operational to strategic corporate decision makers do not recognize the ARB research output as enablers nor supportive, good reason for this is ARB does not involve actively with practicing managers in intellectual activities, barring some eye washing events.

In order to improve the impact of research on stakeholders, business schools should arrange joint research with industry and actively involve them at all levels of intellectual contributions to capture shopfloor knowledge to strategic decisions. As industry practitioners are the main stakeholder of ARB their involvement is of high importance.

One solution is, academicians should come out of their pride, step out of their institutions to work, coordinate with shopfloor executives, work hand in hand with practitioners to produce intellectual assets useful to both worlds, McCabe et al., (2021) in their study referred business schools to bring in revolutionary reforms to accommodate industry practitioners in ARB. Toffel (2016) suggests ARB should investigate those topics which are useful for practicing managers and decision makers. He also suggests not just the research topic, but hypothesis, analysis and implications should be practical even to board of directors, further he says there should be a close cooperation with managers in conducting ARB.

Toffel (2016) suggests research analysis should be in a language understandable different from academic journals, managers are less informed about the ARB jargon. Olga et al (2021) suggest write-up of research paper need to be in an understandable format to practitioners. Further it is suggested that the analysis, discussion and conclusions should be given space in the journal to be presented in a summary format. There is good list of audience or stakeholders for academic research in business via practicing managers, entrepreneurs, charitable trusts, wide range of students, common people. Academicians should co-produce the research output with above listed audience, bringing in ground realities to research publications. Fraternity of ARB should take reference of USP elements from newspaper publication of covering wide variety of audience with usefulness, connectedness, readability, curiosity, interest, sensation, surprise, circulation and reach. Newspaper publications reach a large variety of audience involved in reading and digesting the topics and content with ease, on similar basis ARB should also try to improve its reach breaking the barrier of circular trading of knowledge.

De-coupling research output with faculty member promotion

From long research publications are the important component in promotion of faculty members, lead faculty members to focus on quantity of publishing rather quality (Harzing, 2005). Stremersch, Winer, Camacho (2021) found business schools

consider quantity of publications as an important criterion for promotion. Many suggest other parameters such as quality and relevance of research to society should be given weightage. Initially faculty members use to publish out of self-interest, with progress of time, publishing had taken ugly turn with host of unethical practices. Starting with the top journals putting themselves in narcissistic position, taken publishing to that state where majority cannot reach. Waiting time of top journals range from one to two years makes paper obsolete in terms of data, output, recommendations and conclusions; additionally, acceptance rate is between 3 to 5 percent; and they feel proud mentioning this unscrupulous pursuit on their journals website. They are immature to understand simple reality that their journals reach is very low among academic fraternity, in other way they are not reachable and rejected by 95 percent of academic world, this defeats the purpose of their existence. Business schools got into this filth by giving research publication highest weightage in faculty member promotion from these self-declared category journals.

On the other hand, a large number of journals and lollipops took the opportunity of business school promotion policy, this led to the rise of a huge ugly business opportunity. Countless journals hit the publication market leading to clutter. Journals started to involve in marketing promotion of journals, some started directly charging customers(authors), some started linking to ancillary services like language editing, paper editing, conferences, seminars and all sorts platforms to generate revenue for higher return of investment, this more or less took journals altogether to a new height, looking like the regular profit-making product and services selling companies. Some journals moved to more advanced level by resorting to malpractices giving rise to the devil named "Predatory journals". Overall, the purpose of ARB of enhancing the knowledge become a dirty business.

The only way out for ARB is to de-couple research publication output from faculty promotion. Institutions should consider other parameters of faculty member performance like student feedback, teaching innovation, student evaluation innovation, participation in extracurricular activities, participation in institutional development. Majority of business school survive on revenue from student fee, hence the focus of faculty members should be directed towards student training, skill development, services, placements, alumni relations; in this context considering present day ARB practices giving research output higher weightage in faculty promotion is gross violation of student interests, this is injustice to student welfare.

Research should be incentivized; faculty members should be encouraged to work in coordination with practicing managers for producing intellectual contributions. When research is incentivized, the quality of research output will be judged on very high standards hence few self-motivated faculty members will qualify which keeps the incentive budget within the reach of institution's pocket. Authors should try to avoid self-referencing and journal editors have to adopt policies and practices encouraging stakeholder-oriented research rather than pursuing commercialization.

Shelving out ranking

Majority of ARB output has no impact on practicing world nor general, journal ranking like ISI, Elsevier Scopus, ABCD, Q1/Q2..., should be taken out of shelf from ARB's point of view. Faculty members interested in research should be given research environment which is free from pressures of these databases. These databases with self-defined prejudices have created unnecessary, foolish competition among faculty members to fulfil their journal goals. There are studies which critique the existing journal ranking system, citing serious flaws in the existing ranking system new methodology of ranking is suggested by (Koseoglu, 2020).

Faculty members who are publishing in these databases are epi-centered by journal ranking and receipt of citations for their articles; become high ego centered and his overall contribution to the institution is not proportionate to their research output, nor the salary pay. Alternately author and institutions should take care of quality, they are responsible for the content and its credibility not the journals.

Open access

Largely ARB is subscription based. Intellectual output of authors sold by publishers is denting ARB penetration into society. Publisher justify act of sales to cover the costs. In an age of free information and search engines empowered by AI, publishers and journals are locking knowledge in their private vaults. Publishers and journals should give away the old school of selling the knowledge produced by millions of authors at an unregulated price. One of the alternatives is open access. Through this article I invite all publishers and journals to free the knowledge from their prisons, let authors take responsibility of covering publishing cost and maintenance. Wright, Light, and Stirk (2011) suggest authors to take cost burden of open access to relieve the journals from revenue generation responsibility giving opportunity to focus on other aspects of publication. As authors pay the cost, issue of publishing quality may come down, hence authors themselves should take the onus and be ethical in producing acceptable quality. Academic institutions can also play an active role to internally help faculty members with quality check by linking it to institutional research guidelines. Further Peters et al (2007) discuss a host of dimensions of open access publishing, important suggestion is to funding open access by government agencies, universities, corporate bodies and other private entities. May (2020) suggests open access publications to be given weightage in faculty promotions and give considerable share to open access by research fraternity. Antell, Foote, and Foote (2016) found impact of open access journal are on par with traditional journals.

Creating an open tech platform

In open publication technology platforms, were every author gets rights to publish, but quality is the sole responsibility of author/s himself. When needed the authors work will be judged by those who either are hiring him or promoting. Journals should give away the job of being the judge. Large number of journals have prejudice with superior state of mind, like a cult they reject most of the authors. ABR need open platform like Android technologies. In an open platform plagiarism can controlled by using artificial intelligence where by the platform checks it automatically.

IV. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This study will be extended with an extensive primary data collection from stakeholders of ARB. Practicing managers are important subjects they are the first target for data collection, data will also be collected from government agencies, board of directors, businessmen, and students.

V. CONCLUSION

ARB needs paradigm shifts in its outlook. It should move from introvert to extrovert status. Presently ARB works within its fraternity, creating a massive gap between itself and industry. ARB indulge in number game, encouraging faculty members to publish large quantity of research papers resulting in some extreme cases of individual authors publishing upward 50 papers in one academic year leading to anarchy in ARB. Instead of focusing on quality of research and its impact on stakeholders, faculty members became obsessed with citations. Journals are sources of knowledge dissemination, it's unfortunate they have become commercial entities using marketing and pricing strategies. Institutions are working in isolation without a pinch of realization to work in coordination with industry leading to cultivation of ego problems among its faculty members who are carried away by their degrees and professorship. The only way out for ARB is to wake up from sleep, give a strong dose of antiviral medication to institutions and faculty members to realize the fatal results of behavioral endemic ignoring stakeholders driven research work. Its high time to perform "antahkarana-shuddhi" of ARB. Business schools should mandate a major percentage of research work production in collaboration with industry, faculty members to be directed to

involve in intellectual activities in coordination with practicing managers. Institutions should extend sufficient monetary and non-monetary motivation to faculty members for working with industry practitioners.

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AUTHORS

First Author – Randheer Kokku, Ph.D., College of Business Administration, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: rkokku@ksu.edu.sa.

Correspondence Author – Randheer Kokku, rkokku@ksu.edu.sa, randheerkokku56@gmail.com, Tel: 0096-6309110724.