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A Framework Strategy to Overcome Barriers in Writing for Publication

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Abstract—**As in many countries, Islamic higher education in Indonesia encounters a new challenge: increasing publications rates to be recognized as research-based university. As a result, academics are strongly encouraged to write for refereed journal publication. Nevertheless, writing for publication remains challenging for academics due to internal and external barriers. This article argues that there should be a synergy between institution and academics in overcoming those barriers so that publication rates can be increased. This article is situated in Islamic higher education in Indonesia. It will firstly identify challenges in writing for publication, and continue with proposing a framework strategy to overcome internal and external barriers.**

Keywords: writing, publication, barriers, strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, research has gained a more prominent role in the construction of tripartite - teaching, research, and community service- in higher education. Subsequently, disseminating the research such as in journal publication becomes pivotal as it is the symbol of research completion. Today, academics in higher education are encouraged to publish their articles in a reputable refereed journal has been highlighted as they are crucial in several respective ways. First, journal is a forum to share ideas and innovation in a discipline. Hislop, Murray, and Newton consider publication as a form of communication to which can reach broad audience in the similar discipline [1]; "you have conducted a study and analyzed the data. Now it is time to write. To publish. To tell the world what you have learned" [2].

Further, publication signifies academics' learning and research activities [3]. In other words, presumably, academics who do not publish might not continue their learning or conduct any research. It is crucial for academics to conduct research; as documented by a number of literature there is an intertwined connection among the construction of tripartite -teaching, research, and community service. This implies that research quality is linear to teachings and community service quality. Although it is important to note that only quality research determined quality teaching [4].

In addition, promotion, prestige, and funding are also mentioned as potential benefits for academics which is gained from publication [5]. In comparison, publication will benefit institution because it is one of the compulsory requirements in determining institution's rank among other institutions as the citation work includes home base institution.

In Indonesia, the pivotal role of publication is enacted through Law number 12 Year 2012 article 12, which in detail stipulate that publication is considered as one of the means of learning and developing research culture. Furthermore, the demand for academics to write for publication is explained the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Decree number 17 Year 2013 and the Ministry of Education and Culture (hereafter, MoEC) Decree number 92 Year 2014 which in detail stipulate that academics' promotion is determined by publication in a national and/or international journal. Further, the MoEC decree number 20 Year 2017 stipulates that that publication in national and international journal indexed by Scopus would ascertain incentive for academics in higher education and professorship.

Since these policies also apply to all universities in Indonesia, academics in Islamic higher education is now encountering a new challenge; that is to publish their research in refereed journal. Nevertheless, publishing in a reputable refereed journal has become a thorny issue for academics due to its complexity. As Bridges and Kapp et al. many academics feel that they are not ready and do not put priority on writing for publication [6][7]. Similar condition also prevails in the Indonesian context; thus, it is a little wonder that in 2018 Indonesia ranked 52 out of 283 countries [8].

Presumably, the situation occurred because challenges in writing for publication have not yet properly addressed. Thus, it is urgent to formulate a pertinent strategy which can overcome barriers encountered by academics in writing for publication in order to increase publication rates. This article reviews the literature on internal and external challenges encountered by academics in writing for publication. A framework strategy is outlined providing possible solutions to address the challenges.

II. WRITING FOR PUBLICATION: UNDERLYING BARRIERS

Publishing an article in a refereed journal involved a long and complicated process, even prior to submitting the manuscript to the journal editor. For example, there are six steps approach in preparing manuscript for publication, they are: read to write; select journal the journal you intend to write for; avoid writing the article before you plan what you have to say; contact the editorial team; use the journal as a template for structuring your writing; prepare the final manuscript for publication [9]. After the manuscript is ready, another long process is waiting if the article is accepted. The process may take years before it is actually published in the journal.

Due to its strenuous process, it is a little wonder that many academics consider the process of writing for publication is challenging. The participants involved in an intervention program that aims to improve publication rates claimed that they encountered various difficulties in preparing a manuscript for publication ranging from finding ideas to meet the journal's standard [10]. In fact, the literature has highlighted a wide array of factors considered to be barriers throughout the process of writing for publication, they are as follows:

A. Internal Barriers

1) Individual capacity

Academics are often assumed that they are good at academics writing, and thus writing for publication is not challenging for them; however, a number of studies revealed they also encounter some barriers in publishing their article for a refereed journal [11][12][13].

The difficulties encountered by academics may derive from insufficient training in writing, let alone in writing for publication [14][15]. Most academics experienced formal writing training only in their college years. However, during that particular period they were not taught to write for publication, but to write academic writing for assignment or final paper. Moreover, even on that particular period of time they might not get proper training.

Besides lack of writing skill, barriers may also derive from the disparity between the academics' research knowledge and the current research trend [16]. It is pivotal for academics to keep abreast with their own discipline if they wish to publish their article in a journal [17]. The study focused on what editors want authors to submit. This study involved 50 editors from a reputable journal in education. Drawing on data from survey questionnaires, it was revealed found that "editors are looking for articles that contribute something significant to the field" [18], and this will not be possible if the author does not update their knowledge in the discipline.

2) Negative perceptions towards writing

Data from several studies suggest that academics are often have negative perception towards writing, and writing for publication [19][20][21][22][23]. A number of literature document time is one of the factors that writing is time consuming while they do not have much time to write; thus, time is barriers is considered to be barriers by academics. For example, the participants felt they have limited time to write [24]. In a similar way, the participants in her intervention program claimed that it is difficult for them to prioritize on writing as they have competing demand [25].

Besides limited time, some negative feelings often relates to writing such as anxiety, fear of rejection, and lack of confidence. These negative perceptions usually resulted in procrastination; that is to postpone writing in this case which is a common behavior during the process of conducting research project [26].

Unfortunately, overcoming negative perception is rarely discussed in writing for publication workshops of coaching; in fact, these programs are sometimes strengthened the negative perception as they often highlight the complexity and demanding competition of publishing in a refereed journal. Given this phenomenon, it is not surprising that some academics have the tendency to avoid writing due to the fact that it is an arduous job with little chance to succeed.

B. External Barriers

A number of studies postulate that environment plays crucial role in contribute significantly to enhance research productivity and increase publication rates. However, sometimes environment where academics work become barriers instead of support in encouraging academics to write for publication. Institution can become a barrier due to the following factors:

1) Policy

Undeniably, writing for publication involves high effort and support; however, institution's support in terms of policy remain low. In fact, they are only focused on academics' role to fulfill the obligation which to certain extent can be intimidating. For example, on the MoEC decree number 20 Year 2017, incentive will not be provided if they are not published. That includes publication is one of the compulsory requirements for promotion.

It should be understood that previously the primary role for academics in higher education is teaching; only after universities direct their institution to research-oriented that research gains its prominent role. This implies that academics need support to accustomed themselves in living their role as researchers. Thus, there should be policy in managing teaching workloads as they need to spend their time to

perform their role as researchers. In addition, rewards provided for academics who are successful publishing their work in a reputable journal needs to undergo another long process. There should be policy in managing them.

2) Facility

A conducive writing environment is essential for writing productivity. Environment can include rooms and service. Logically, if teaching is facilitated with several equipment such as classroom, projector, air conditioner and so on; then, in performing their role as researcher academics should also be supported with some research tools. Nevertheless, this kind of support are often unavailable for academics. Often, institutions do not provide space to write, good internet service, access to important sources from library.

In terms of service, some institutions do not provide services which can help academics in conducting their research such as language consultant, statistical service, or staff as research assistant.

III. OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

There is a wide array of internal and external factors which can hamper academics to write for publication. Writing for publication is indeed challenging and requires a lot of effort. Nevertheless, the benefits worth the struggle, and challenges can be overcome as illustrated by the figure below:
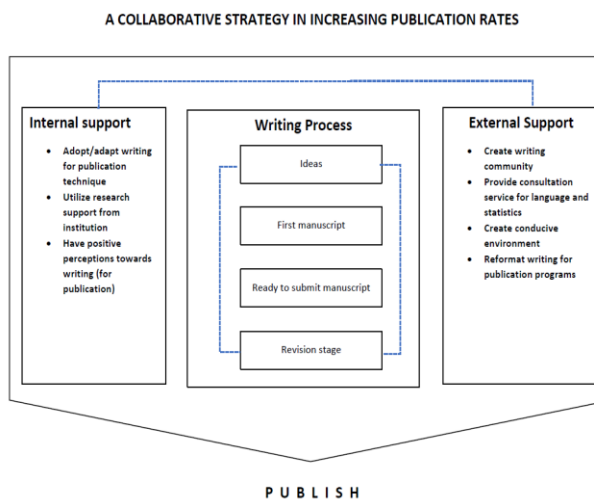

Fig. 1. A Collaborative Strategy in Increasing Publication Rates

A. Institutional Support

1) Writing community

Over the past decade, most studies in writing for publication has emphasized the important role of research environment in nurturing research productivity. Research environment can be created by organizing writing activities at faculty level where academics spend their time in research-related activities. Having writing community can be function as a support group during the complicated process of writing for publication. In fact, in their systematic review of intervention programs for writing for publication, support group has more prominent role in improving publication rates compare to short-term workshop and/or coaching arrangement [27]. It has also been confirmed the prominent role of research environment [28]. Elaborate Institution may establish writing retreat in order to create writing community. Writing retreat can be described as an event where writers gathered for certain period of time during whatever stages of writing, and during the event commonly writers share strategies and concerns, and write for long stretches at a time. In between the writing, there were short facilitated sessions on various issues related to writing or coaching. A number of studies have postulated the potential benefits of writing retreat, namely provide time and space to focus on writing, hinder writing barriers, and increase motivation [29][30][31][32]. In addition, using the framework of containment, it was found that writing retreat "is a model for academics to meet the demand of research assessment… (and)… strategic engagement -a model for producing regular writing for publication while continuing to meet other professional demands" [33].

2) Language and statistical support

Besides writing community, another support that can increase publication rates is language consultant. Most of refereed journal are not written in Bahasa Indonesia; as a consequence, academics encounter another challenge in writing for publication: writing in foreign language. This can be very challenging because every language has its own pattern of discourse; thus, fluency in foreign language can be difficult for most academics. Providing language support can be in the form of editor, academics are allocated certain amount of time to consult as they have the manuscript prior to submitting to the journal. This is important as lack of language skill may hamper comprehension that the journal editor may not comprehend what is written despite the ideas offered. Statistical support will also contribute to increase the publication rates. Some academics may encounter difficulties in managing software that continue revolving through time or research design that may not be around during their college years. Not only for quantitative research, qualitative researchers may also attain some benefits from statistical support, software such as NVivo or even coding using excel can be troublesome for some academics to manage.

3) Conducive facilities

Another support that institution should provide is conducive facility. Access to journal, supportive

librarian, and conducive working environment are some factors that can facilitate enhancement in publication. Often, academics are not supported with working environment. If research is considered to have prominent role as teaching, then research need to be facilitated with suffice environment such as in teaching provided with equipment with classroom, LCD, and air conditioner. Despite the central role of research, it is often considered as an individual activity not as part of academics' activities; thus, they need to do it at home which may not be productive as they have different role. "The establishment of a research culture takes time, careful planning, and the right environment" [34]. In a similar vein, successful writers are supported with facilities as follows [35]:

a) availability resources to write for publication

b) access to library

c) availability of support staff to help prepare manuscript

4) Change the professional development foci

As has been mentioned in the previous section, professional development as a way to increase publication rates are often conducted in a short-term one-off model. This may only give a brief honeymoon for academics; however, after the program is over academics are left on their own figuring out how to publish. It is long-term workshop that can enhance publication rates instead of the short-term workshop [36]. In addition, these programs focused on polishing a ready manuscript neglecting the crucial process of writing development. Thus, it is high time to reorient professional development programs. These programs should include how to effectively used writing process to publication process.

B. Internal Support

Institution plays prominent role in increasing publication rates; however, support from institution solely is insufficient without support from the academics themselves as individuals. There are several strategies of how academics can support themselves overcoming their internal challenges and improving their productivity in writing for publication. These strategies are as follows:

1) Adopt/adapt writing for publication techniques

Undoubtedly, enhancing writing productivity is one of the greatest challenges for authors; hence, a number of techniques are developed to address the goal. These techniques which can be adopted or adopted by academics can be very specific addressing particular context in writing including in writing for publication, for example by publishing a book on how to write an article for journal in 12 weeks [37]. In the book, it is elaborated thoroughly what author should do weekly in order to have a ready manuscript starting from designing plan for writing to responding to journal decision [38].

Other techniques to enhance productivity focus on solving problems in writing. For example, Kearns and Gardiner offer several techniques on how to overcome procrastination [39]. Their technique emphasizes on three stages: broken down writing into small chunks; apply deadline for each chunk; and give rewards if author can meet the deadline.

Improving writing productivity can also be achieved simply by adopting general writing technique such as Pomodoro technique developed by Francescocririllo. The goal of this technique is to improve concentration so that authors can write productively. Simply put, the technique combined 25 minutes writing without any distraction and five minutes break (https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique).

2) Utilize institution support

Academics are encouraged to make use of research support from institution or else the support will be futile in increasing publication rates. In fact, some external support from institution can help to overcome internal barriers. For example, participating in writing retreat may overcome negative perception towards writing for publication because it enables author to identify common problem in writing. In addition, writing retreat can also improve writer's knowledge about their own discipline and publication. This 'subconscious learning moment' can occur during breaktime when authors interact and engage with each other.

3) Have positive perceptions toward writing

Above all, academics should 'eradicate' negative perception towards writing for publication. Comments reviewers should be perceived as means of learning instead of being fear, anxious, and lack of confidence. Academics should also change their perception about time constraints. Writing for publication does time consuming, and they do have competing demand in their life. Nonetheless, other authors who have successfully published their article in refereed journal are most likely in similar situation where they need to juggle among other things throughout the writing process. This implies that time cannot be considered as a barrier provided that writer can effectively manage their time.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Undeniably, writing for publication holds prominent role in higher education context due to its potential benefits for both academics and institutions. Unfortunately, many academics still find publishing their research in a referee journal as a complicated issue due to a number of internal and external barriers. Nevertheless, these barriers can be

overcome; as proposed in this article to increase publication rates, it is suggested for institution to establish writing community, provide writing and statistical consultant, provide supportive environment, and reformat professional development in line with the academics' needs. In comparison, academics as individuals should actively participate in programs provided by the institution as an aim to improve writing productivity. In addition, academics are also required to improve their research capacity in terms of writing and research skill. Above all, this article highlights the pivotal role of positive perceptions towards writing for publication.

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