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Lessons Learned in Establishing a Quality International Journal: Mission Impossible?

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Lessons Learned in Establishing a Quality International Journal: Mission Impossible?

It is with mixed emotions that I depart as the editor-in-chief of *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia*. I started serving as the editor-in-chief in 2012. From my predecessor, A.N. Liche Seniati, I received a journal with high achievements as a national journal: timely publication with good quality articles in Bahasa Indonesia. During the seven years of my service as the editor-in-chief, I humbly cherished the opportunity to grow this journal and its communities further. We have grown from a national journal to an international journal indexed in Clarivate Analytic: ESCI (Emerging Sources Citation Indexed), ACI (ASEAN citation indexed), EBSCO, as well as Indonesia's national accreditation, DOAJ green tick, and Google Scholar. The respect from international communities has increased substantially, which can be seen in that 50% of our editorial boards are well respected international scholars, 30 to 40% of our authors are international authors, our readers come from 102 countries, and the number of citations for our articles in quality journals have increased (see Riantoputra, 2019).

This substantial progress has not been easy considering we, just like many journals from Indonesia, face enormous challenges, such as systematic barriers in university procedures, and insufficient university support for editors. At the national level, we face inadequate national regulation to support reviewers and editors. That is, their works, as reviewers and editors, are not acknowledged meaningfully for their academic promotion. Further, national regulations concerning international achievements are short-sighted. Specifically, the government defines 'reputable' international journals based on which data-bases a journal is indexed while forgetting other criteria such as the number of international scholars as members of the editorial board, international writers, etc. In other words, the Indonesian government focuses on outcome-related criteria and disregards process-related criteria, which is very important in supporting any journals to be 'reputable' international journals. These challenges have made it almost impossible to manage a journal seeking to achieve international standards. However, seeing what this journal has achieved, I feel that the discipline, commitment, and hard work have paid off. In this farewell message, I would like to share my reflections on what I consider critical factors in developing a journal in Indonesia.

First, managing a journal requires a clear definition of the journal's identity. This aspect is hardly ever discussed in workshops on journal management in Indonesia. Identity plays an essential part in the management of each organization (Gioia, Patvardhan,

Hamilton & Corley, 2013). It shapes the way the managers, or in this case, the editorial board, interacts and discusses future goals and ways to manage challenges (Riantoputra, 2010). For a journal, its identity is reflected in its name, aims, and scope. Just like organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985), a journal's identity needs to describe its central, distinctive, and relatively enduring characteristics. It is a definition of who we are as a journal. For our journal, the discussion of our identity is the basis for our development. It took two long years of heated discussion until, in 2014, the editorial board agreed to redefine our journal as an international journal named *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia*. This meant that we decided to move our aims and scope from a journal that serves all disciplines in social sciences and humanities to a narrower scope of human behavior studies. Our focus now is to publish empirical studies of people of Asian origin, irrespective of where they live. Our name 'Makara' also signifies the university where the journal comes from, which is Universitas Indonesia (UI). Acknowledging our history in UI indicates that we will pursue UI's goal to bring betterment to Indonesia.

Once we agreed on our new identity, it was much easier for us to decide our strategic directions. For example, we decided to publish articles in English, establish editorial boards from several disciplines in human behavior studies, invite international scholars in the area of human behaviors as our editors and collaborate with networks or conferences in Asia (such as ARUPS – ASEAN Union of Psychological Societies, or Lead in Asia conference). The clear identity helps us to define the communities that we serve, the focus of our attention, and most importantly, it assists the discussion on each strategic and practical aspect concerning the management of this journal. For example, we were able to quickly settle the dilemma of whether to publish articles in English or to publish articles in Bahasa Indonesia (as preferred by many Indonesian authors). True to our identity as an international journal, we are committed to publishing articles in English. However, true to our aim to bring betterment to Indonesian communities, we fought for grants to assist the translation process of accepted articles that were still in Bahasa Indonesia into English.

The clear identity also assisted us in facing disappointment when, in mid-2019, our application to Scopus was rejected. Yes, we needed two weeks to grieve. However, we moved on quickly, because our identity drives us to continue our tasks in choosing potential articles and shaping them into quality articles ready to be published and to be read by international

communities. We took the inputs from Scopus to increase the citations of our articles seriously and maintain the strategy that we have formulated earlier to increase our citation. For example, we are continuing our strategy in relation to publishing articles from authors with high h-index based on the assumption that their articles may be cited more than articles from early-career authors. In this December publication, we were able to publish several articles from high h-index scholars. This tendency, hopefully, will continue.

Second, managing a journal necessitates respect for the three critical stakeholders: authors, reviewers, and editors. I see them as the three musketeers in producing quality articles. Each one of them is equally important. Each one of them has to do their job while respecting the role of the others. Editors and reviewers need to recognize that authors have worked very hard before they submit an article. Editors' and reviewers' choice of words in evaluating an article should reflect this appreciation. Authors need to value the time and efforts that editors and reviewers have allocated in providing input for them. Most editors and reviewers work voluntarily, without demanding for financial reward. Their work is a labor of love, an effort to improve the quality of articles of their colleagues (the authors). Therefore, authors need to respect every input from reviewers and editors and attend to each one of them when revising their articles.

In my early time as the editor-in-chief, our journal has revised the referee report and conducted workshops to improve the quality of reviews to make sure that editors and reviewers treat authors respectfully. We, as editors, are also trying to put our best effort to respect authors. For example, several years ago, we found that an article that has been reviewed by our reviewers was published in another journal. Instead of assuming that the author had bad intentions, we chose to communicate politely with the lead author and assisted him in understanding the ethical standard in publication. That effort was fruitful, not only in making sure that our journal only published original articles that have not been published anywhere, but also in developing a writer. I find it meaningful to see that, now, the lead author is the editor-in-chief of a well-respected journal in Indonesia. During seven years as the editor-in-chief, I witnessed that the attitude and professionalism of both authors and reviewers have become more positive and more ethical.

Third, managing a journal demands strategic initiatives to increase its impact. Usually, a journal's impact is measured in how many times its articles are cited. To increase our citations, we focused on increasing the visibility of our journal (through an interesting and easy-to-access website) and improving the quality of our articles. However, an increased citation score is not

the only measure of impact. As discussed by Montgomery and Neylon (2019), the primary value of a journal is in the community it creates. Since 2013, our journal has conducted many paper-development workshops for writers in Indonesia. Most of our initiated writing workshops were conducted in Jakarta (where UI is). For all of them, we have managed to gain substantial grants so that aspiring writers from many parts of Indonesia are financially supported to attend our workshops to sharpen their writing skills. We have also responded to invitations from many other islands in Indonesia, including in Papua, to provide writing workshops. By so doing, not only have the quality of our articles improved, our journal has been actively involved in the development of early-career writers.

Our journal is also committed to bringing betterment to society. In 2019, we conducted two mini-symposia aimed at starting discourse in the society, about "Young People and Media" and "Diversity and Healthy Relationships." Both symposia were chosen to address significant challenges in Indonesian society and abroad. In both symposia, we invited key scholars from many parts of the world (for the name of the invitees, see Riantoputra, 2019). Both symposia successfully provided opportunities for Indonesian researchers to interact with prominent scholars and also stimulated discussion in the society about the topics. These discussions were continued in Indonesian newspapers; for example, articles by Putri (2019), Rahayu (2019), and Embu (2019). By stimulating discourse in Indonesian society, our journal aims to have an impact on society.

Fourth, managing a journal requires people management. Many times, we forget that it is people who manage a journal. Thus, the way to improve the quality of a journal will always involve managing the people who work day-to-day for the journal. Two essential aspects of people management that have considerable bearings in this journal are providing opportunities to grow and trust.

The management of many journals in Indonesia relies on the willingness of some people to work voluntarily since there is no financial reward available for working in journals. This unpaid work includes working as editors and as assistant editors or staff. Different from managing a journal linked with well-established publishers and associations who provide support and reliable websites, managing a journal in Indonesia involves constructing a website and finding grants to support the journal financially. Therefore, the administrative work related to it are astounding, and the chief editor must find ways to motivate people who work for the journal. One way to motivate people is by assisting them to see working in a journal as their calling since people who perceive work as calling tend to work wholeheartedly and demonstrate resilience in

facing challenges (Riasnugrahani, Riantoputra, Takwin, & Panggabean, 2019).

Providing opportunities to grow is an effective way to achieve that. In addition to learning from each other, our journal continuously provides opportunities for people to grow and to be known in scientific communities. The result of a chance to learn from other team members, especially senior academics, has successfully groomed two of our assistant editors (Joevarian Hudijana and Muhammad Abdan Shadiqi) in journal management. These two people started assisting us when they were just accepted in a doctoral degree in Universitas Indonesia. Through our journal, they have become known in the community of journals in Indonesia and now serve as managing editors in two respected journals in Indonesia. Because of our journal, two of our editors have become key people in an organization for journal development in Indonesia, and many times our editors have become invited speakers in writing workshops. Providing opportunities to grow is essential to maintain the motivation and commitment of people who work voluntarily for journals.

Further, trust plays a significant part in managing a team with several competent scholars from different backgrounds. Most journals in Indonesia are struggling to have a good number of people with international publications to serve in their journals. However, our journal is blessed with a team of experts. During the first half of my service as the editor-in-chief, I had the honor of working closely with dedicated scholars, who are A.N. Liche Seniati, Andreas Budihardjo, Adrianus Meilala, Achmad Setyo Hadi, Ide Bagus Siaputra, and Manneke Budiman. During the second half of my service, I had the privilege of working closely with committed scholars, which are Edo S. Jaya, Laras Sekarasih, Muhammad Abdan Shadiqi, Mirra Noor Milla, Manneke Budiman, Turro S. Wongkaren, Hendriyani, and Hana Panggabean. These people represent different disciplines, research traditions, and universities in Indonesia.

The positive side of working with experts from several disciplines and research traditions is that they have many different ideas, which provide opportunities for the journal to flourish in many ways. The challenge of working with them is that they have many different ideas, which creates a possibility of conflict. Thus, the key in the management of experts is to provide a safe opportunity for each of them to express themselves and at the same time, make sure that differences of opinion do not result in unresolved conflict. In other words, there is a need to manage trust, which consists of both cognitive and affective trust. While cognitive trust hinges on respect for the other person's job-related competencies, affective trust centers on emotional ties and personal intimacies (Yang & Mossholder, 2010). In

a collectivistic country like Indonesia, managing affective trust in a working team is as vital as managing cognitive trust (Mustika & Riantoputra, 2017). Thus, both types of trust need to be reinforced. In my experience, cognitive trust can be boosted by acknowledging and highlighting the expertise of each team member. On the other hand, the development of affective trust needs to be achieved over time through personal relationships. Because of cognitive and affective trust, this journal has maintained a group of passionate and committed people from different research traditions to work together closely for years.

It is with deep appreciation that I would like to thank the team that has worked with me in the day-to-day management of *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia*. Their work has been substantial not only in increasing the quality and impact of this journal but also in establishing a positive and trustful climate. I have to say that *Makara Human Behavior in Asia* has managed what I considered as nearly impossible challenges only because of this great team. Moreover, it should be noted that the role of our international editors has also been influential in setting high standards, providing advice, and shaping the international climate of the day-to-day management of our journal.

Before my final statement, I would like to express my gratitude to the three musketeers in producing quality articles: authors, reviewers, and editors in supporting *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia* during my service as the editor-in-chief. I hope that authors and reviewers will continue working with the new editorial team.

Just like the previous editor-in-chief: A.N. Liche Seniati that prepared me as her successor, and ensured a smooth transition, now, with confidence, I would like to pass the leadership of this journal to a passionate researcher and author: Edo S. Jaya. Together with Laras Sekarasih and Muhammad Abdan Shadiqi, these three people have been essential in the development of our journal for at least the last two years. I am positive that they will improve the quality and impact of this journal, and bring betterment to our communities.

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