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REVIEW ARTICLE

Identifying the challenges of the regulations for the promotion of faculty members in Universities of Medical Sciences: A meta synthesis of existing studies

Background: This research aimed to identify the challenges of the regulations for the promotion of faculty members in Iranian universities of medical sciences.

Method: This qualitative research was conducted using the meta-synthesis method and organized in two steps. In the first step, a systematic review method has been used. Based on this, the specialized keywords of the research were searched in international authoritative databases; Science Direct, Springer, Wiley Online Library, PubMed, ERIC, Sage Journals, Emerald, and authoritative national databases; Magiran, Noormags, SID, portals of the Islamic Parliament Research Center, and other national portals, and this search was done during some years (1388-1401) and (2010-2021). In this search, there were 39 studies among which 17 studies were selected based on the PRISMA evaluation form. In the second step, the thematic analysis method of Wolcott (2008) was used.

Results: In the results, three primary subcategories including structural weakness, content weakness, and executive weakness were identified as the challenges of the regulations for the promotion of faculty members. These factors were categorized in the form of eight secondary subcategories, including weakness in design, weakness in supervision, weakness in the educational sector, weakness in the research sector, weakness in the cultural sector, weakness in implementation at the university level, weakness in implementation at the extra-university level, and weakness in the implementation of regulations.

Conclusion: The results of the research can help policymakers and decision-makers in medical sciences universities to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of research and educational achievements by optimizing the policies of the bylaws to promote faculty members.

Keywords: Challenges of Science Institution, Promotion Regulations, Promotion Criteria, Faculty Development, Knowledge Production

شناسایی چالش های آئین نامه ارتقای اعضای هیأت علمی در دانشگاه های علوم پزشکی: فراترکیب مطالعات موجود

زمینه و هدف: هدف از این پژوهش، شناسایی چالش های آئین نامه ارتقای اعضای هیأت علمی در دانشگاه های علوم پزشکی ایران است.

روش: این پژوهش کیفی با استفاده روش فراترکیب انجام و در دو مرحله سازماندهی شده است. در مرحله اول از روش مرور سیستماتیک استفاده شده است. بر این اساس، کیلوواژه های تخصصی تحقیق در پایگاه های معتبر بین المللی Springer, Science Direct, Wiley Online Library, Emerald, Sage Journals, ERIC, PubMed, Magiran و پایگاه های داده معتبر ملی؛ مگیران، نورمگز، پایگاه اطلاعاتی جهاد دانشگاهی و گزارشات ملی در بازه زمانی (۱۳۸۸-۱۴۰۱) و بازه زمانی (۲۰۱۰-۲۰۲۱) جستجو شدند. در این جستجو ۳۹ مطالعه وجود داشت که از بین آنها ۱۷ مطالعه بر اساس فرم ارزیابی PRISMA انتخاب شدند. در مرحله دوم از روش تحلیل موضوعی ولکات (۲۰۰۸) استفاده شد.

یافته ها: سه مقوله فرعی اولیه شامل ضعف ساختاری، ضعف محتوایی و ضعف اجرایی، به عنوان چالش های آئین نامه ارتقای اعضای هیأت علمی در دانشگاه های علوم پزشکی شناسایی شدند. این مقوله ها در قالب هشت زیر مقوله ثانویه شامل ضعف در طراحی، ضعف نظارتی، ضعف در بخش آموزشی، ضعف در بخش پژوهش، ضعف در بخش فرهنگی، ضعف اجرا در سطح دانشگاه، ضعف اجرا در سطح فرا دانشگاهی و ضعف اجرا آئین نامه، دسته بندی شدند.

نتیجه گیری: یافته های این پژوهش می تواند به سیاست گذاران و تصمیم گیران در دانشگاه های علوم پزشکی کمک کند تا با بهینه سازی سیاست های آئین نامه ارتقاء اعضای هیأت علمی کارایی و اثربخشی دستاوردهای پژوهشی و آموزشی را افزایش دهند.

واژه های کلیدی: آئین نامه ارتقاء، توسعه هیأت علمی، تولید دانش، چالش های نهاد علم، معیارهای ترفیع و ارتقاء،

التعرف على تحديات أنظمة ترقية أعضاء هيئة التدريس في جامعات العلوم الطبية: تلخيص الدراسات الموجودة

الخلفية: يهدف هذا البحث إلى التعرف على تحديات لوائح ترقية أعضاء هيئة التدريس في جامعات العلوم الطبية الإيرانية.

الطريقة: تم إجراء هذا البحث النوعي باستخدام طريقة التجميع التلوي وتم تنظيمه في خطوتين: في الخطوة الأولى، تم استخدام طريقة المراجعة المنهجية. وبناءً على ذلك، تم البحث في الكلمات المفتاحية المتخصصة للبحث في قواعد البيانات العالمية الموثوقة؛ Science Direct، Springer، و Wiley Online و PubMed و ERIC و Sage Journals و Emerald. وقواعد البيانات الوطنية الموثوقة؛ مجيران، نورمجاز، سيد، بوابات مركز أبحاث البرلمان الإسلامي، وغيرها من البوابات الوطنية، وقد تم هذا البحث خلال بعض السنوات (1388-1401) و (2010-2021). في هذا البحث، كانت هناك 39 دراسة، تم اختيار 17 دراسة منها بناءً على نموذج تقييم PRISMA. وفي الخطوة الثانية، تم استخدام أسلوب التحليل الموضوعي لـ Wolcott (2008).

النتائج: في النتائج، تم تحديد ثلاث فئات فرعية رئيسية هي الضعف الهيكلي، وضعف المحتوى، والضعف التنفيذي باعتبارها تحديات أنظمة ترقية أعضاء هيئة التدريس. وتم تصنيف هذه العوامل على شكل ثمانية فئات فرعية ثانوية، تشمل ضعف التصميم، ضعف الإشراف، ضعف القطاع التعليمي، ضعف قطاع الأبحاث، ضعف القطاع الثقافي، ضعف التنفيذ على المستوى الجامعي، ضعف التنفيذ على المستوى خارج الجامعي، وضعف في تطبيق اللوائح.

الاستنتاج: يمكن لنتائج البحث أن تساعد واضعي السياسات وصناع القرار في جامعات العلوم الطبية على زيادة كفاءة وفعالية الإنجازات البحثية والتعليمية من خلال تحسين سياسات اللوائح لترقية أعضاء هيئة التدريس.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحديات المؤسسة العلمية، ضوابط الترقية، معايير الترقية، تطوير أعضاء هيئة التدريس، إنتاج المعرفة

میڈیکل سائنسز کی یونیورسٹیوں میں فیکلٹی ممبران کے فروغ کے لیے ضوابط کے چیلنجز کی نشاندہی کرنا: موجودہ مطالعات کی ایک میٹا ترکیب

پس منظر: اس تحقیق کا مقصد ایرانی میڈیکل سائنسز کی یونیورسٹیوں میں فیکلٹی ممبران کے فروغ کے لیے قواعد و ضوابط کے چیلنجز کی نشاندہی کرنا تھا.

طریقہ: یہ معیاری تحقیق میٹا سنتھیسز کے طریقہ کار کا استعمال کرتے ہوئے کی گئی اور اسے دو مراحل میں ترتیب دیا گیا۔ پہلے مرحلے میں، ایک منظم جائزہ کا طریقہ استعمال کیا گیا ہے۔ اس کی بنیاد پر تحقیق کے خصوصی مطلوبہ الفاظ کو بین الاقوامی مستند ڈیٹا بیس میں تلاش کیا گیا۔ سائنس ڈائریکٹ، اسپرنگر، ولی آن لائن لائبریری، پی ایچ، ایرک، سیج جرنلز، ایمرالڈ، اور مستند قومی ڈیٹا بیس؛ Magiran، Noormags، SID، اسلامک پارلیمنٹ ریسرچ سینٹر کے پورٹلز، اور دیگر قومی پورٹلز، اور یہ تلاش کچھ سالوں (۱۳۸۸-۱۴۰۱) اور (۲۰۱۰-۲۰۲۱) کے دوران کی گئی۔ اس تلاش میں، ۳۹ مطالعات تھے جن میں سے ۱۷ مطالعات کا انتخاب PRISMA تشخیصی فارم کی بنیاد پر کیا گیا تھا۔ دوسرے مرحلے میں Wolcott (2008) کا موضوعاتی تجزیہ کا طریقہ استعمال کیا گیا۔

نتائج: نتائج میں، تین بنیادی ذیلی زمرہ جات بشمول ساختی کمزوری، مواد کی کمزوری، اور ایگزیکٹو کمزوری کو فیکلٹی ممبران کے فروغ کے لیے ضابطوں کے چیلنجز کے طور پر شناخت کیا گیا۔ ان عوامل کو آٹھ ثانوی ذیلی زمروں کی شکل میں درجہ بندی کیا گیا، جن میں ڈیزائن میں کمزوری، نگرانی میں کمزوری، تعلیمی شعبے میں کمزوری، تحقیق کے شعبے میں کمزوری، ثقافتی شعبے میں کمزوری، یونیورسٹی کی سطح پر عمل درآمد میں کمزوری، عمل درآمد میں کمزوری شامل ہیں۔ ماورائے جامعہ کی سطح پر، اور ضوابط کے نفاذ میں کمزوری۔

نتیجہ: تحقیق کے نتائج طبی سائنسز کی یونیورسٹیوں میں پالیسی سازوں اور فیصلہ سازوں کو فیکلٹی ممبران کو فروغ دینے کے لیے بائی لاز کی پالیسیوں کو بہتر بنا کر تحقیق اور تعلیمی کامیابیوں کی کارکردگی اور تاثیر کو بڑھانے میں مدد کر سکتے ہیں۔

کلیدی الفاظ: سائنس انسٹی ٹیوشن کے چیلنجز، پرموشن ریگولیشنز، پرموشن معیار، فیکلٹی ڈیولپمنٹ، نالج پروڈکشن

INTRODUCTION

Recent decades, marked by challenges like the knowledge-based economy, globalization, and environmental concerns, redefine and alter universities' missions. (1,2,3) With all these changes, universities are still considered one of the most important factors in the economic growth of different countries by having expert human resource (4). This has caused governments to emphasize more on the human capital of universities and invest more on it (4). Faculty members play a practical and fundamental role in universities as the most critical human resources (5). Some believe that the success of faculty members requires their integration, research, education, and managerial and executive activities. But for some other faculty members, success is focusing on their field of work. Some others change their field of activity in order to adapt to the changes in needs, and another group integrates executive and management activities with specialized and research fields (6). So, professional success requires involvement in professional growth throughout the career (6). Faculty promotion regulations significantly guide members' activities in education, research, and administration in universities (7). Since 2005, the Ministry of Science has reviewed regulations for faculty promotion, emphasizing scientific articles as a key factor. This criterion is crucial for Ph.D. exams and faculty recruitment, serving as a measure of the country's scientific growth. The regulation significantly guides faculty activities (8,9). Currently, the emphasis on international articles is rising in faculty promotion. We will detail this trend over the past five years.

In Table 1, we can see the citation status of indexed articles in Iran during the years 1996-2020.

Medical faculties and universities crucially impact national development, directly influence the societal health. Neglecting this role hampers progress, wasting human resources. With over 80,000 faculty and 4 million academic community members in various institutions, their influence extends to decision-making in hundreds of universities and institutes. The promotion regulation, designed for service compensation management, stands as a key tool in higher education for motivating faculty. It is currently the primary tool for managing and redesigning this academic collection (10). The regulation emphasizes originality, considers the article not as a product but as a goal. This approach compels faculty, particularly new hires in scientific organizations, to prioritize publishing numerous articles for career continuity (11). The employment regulation of Tehran University faculty members, which was approved in 1969, is considered the first regulation for promoting faculty members in the country's universities (12).

The promotion regulations underwent six revisions before the seventh stage was approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution on 08/03/2015 and implemented on 12/21/2015. This regulation assesses faculty members based on cultural, educational, research, and executive activities. Evolving into a fundamental law, it governs various university procedures, influences employment laws related to faculty members, includes status changes, annual promotions, educational and research evaluations, and other rules outlined in this statute (13).

This research has been compiled with the aim of identifying the challenges of the regulations for the promotion of faculty members in Universities of Medical Sciences. So, the following two questions have been proposed;

- What are the most important challenges for the promotion of faculty members in Iran's universities of medical sciences?
- What criticism and analysis is there about the harms of the regulations for the promotion of faculty members in Iran's universities of medical sciences, especially in the quantitative growth of scientific productions in Iran?

METHODS

Since this research is an applied research, the data was collected as documents. In this research, specifically, the meta-synthesis method has been used. Meta-synthesis is a systematic combination and interpretation of the findings of studies in a specific area to create a deeper understanding of the desired phenomenon. This process includes some steps; 1) designing questions; 2) applying the search strategy; 3) extraction of key concepts, and 4) combination of critical concepts (14,15)

Based on this methodological framework, in the first stage, the study explored the records of the subject, using various parameters such as the studied society, what and how the questions are made. This research examined two questions: What are the most critical challenges for promoting faculty members in Iran's universities of medical sciences? And what criticism and analysis is there regarding the harms of the regulations for promoting faculty members of Iranian universities of medical sciences, especially in the quantitative growth of scientific productions in Iran? In the second step, a systematic review research strategy was used. Based on this, specialized research keywords using the Or operator in the reliable international databases of Science Direct, Springer, Wiley Online Library, PubMed, ERIC, Sage Journals, Emerald, and reliable national databases; Magiran, Noonmags, SID, portals of the Islamic Parliament Research Center and other national portals and this search was done during some years (1388-1401) and the years

Table 1. Citation status of indexed articles in Iran during the years 1996-2020

Total documents	Citable documents	Citation	Self-citations	Citations in each document	H-index
662189	632705	7048776	2395956	1064	376

Source: Scimago (2021)

(2010-2021). There were 39 studies in this search, among which 17 studies were selected based on the PRISMA evaluation form (16).

Then, the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP), a tool for evaluating the quality of primary qualitative research studies, was used. This 10-question tool helps the researcher determine the studies' accuracy, validity, and importance. The questions reflect the following aspects; 1) research objectives; 2) the logic of the method; 3) research plan; 4) sampling method; 5) data collection; 6) reflexivity; 7) ethical considerations; 8) accuracy in data analysis; 9) clear statement of findings, and 10) research value. Then the researcher assigns a minor score to each question and creates a form to count the scores of the articles. Based on the scoring of this tool, pieces with a score of less than 30 are removed. Excellent (40-50), very good (31-40), good (21-30), average (11-20), and poor (0-10) (17).

The inclusion criteria of the articles were: the existence of a study in the researched field, the type of study: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed, time limitation, and access to the full text of the article. Criteria for excluding articles were: articles that did not fit the topic based on the PRISMA form in three stages; Title, abstract, and text.

In the third and fourth stages, Wolcott's (2008) thematic analysis method was used to extract and combine information. Thematic analysis is a qualitative and clustering method that identifies semantic patterns in a data set. This analysis is the process of identifying marks or themes in qualitative data (18). In this research, Wolcott's three-step thematic analysis strategy (19) has been specifically used. This model has three stages, which will be explained more in each of the stages related to the research. The first stage is a description of data. After extracting the results of the articles, these results were implemented separately. The second stage is data

analyzing, organizing, arranging, and thermalizing. At this stage, the key concepts were reviewed several times. Then the critical concepts related to each article were counted and noted separately. Key ideas (codes) based on commonalities and differences were placed in the form of primary subcategories. The third step is data interpretation. The results of this step are described in Table 1. In order to validate the data quality, the review strategy by the research cooperator was used. After the key concepts were counted, they were also checked by another research cooperator to reach a consensus on the classification of concepts (20).

RESULTS

Table 2 describes the results of qualitative content analysis.

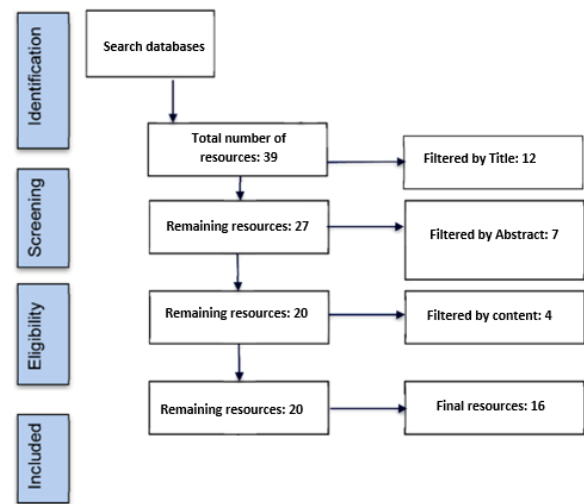


Figure 1. Final selection process of the studied resources

Table 2. Results of qualitative content analysis		
Secondary subcategories	Primary subcategories	Key Concepts
Structural weakness	Weakness in design	Equal consideration of the weight of activities and standards developed in different disciplines; Subjectivity of some promotion indicators; difficulty in measuring abstract concepts; Basing international ranking criteria on research activities; paying less attention to writing and translating books; Low time intervals for promotion to higher ranks; the same look at all universities and geographical areas; Lack of sufficient attention to the academic merits of the student during his admission and selection based on quota and taste; All the professor's affairs are tied to the regulations for the promotion of professors (salaries, grants and laboratory facilities of the university, etc.); The prominent presence of supply-oriented paradigm policies in the regulations; Failure of the policy maker to provide a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of the regulations; Weakness in modeling global experiences; Opposing educational and research activities instead of strengthening each other; Ease in granting executive privileges and reducing their effectiveness in encouraging faculty members to accept executive responsibility; Ignoring the tension and stress caused by executive responsibilities; Ignoring women's lower chances of holding executive positions compared to men
	Supervisory weakness	Bandwagon and science fiction; lack of monitoring and follow-up; Weakness of professors' penalty structure; Applying the discretionary opinion of the audit board; lack of transparency and complexity of the process; lack of specialized approach in the final evaluation in the specialized commission and audit committee; ineffectiveness of control structures; Administrative function instead of focusing on comprehensive promotion of education and research

Table 2. Continued		
Secondary subcategories	Primary subcategories	Key Concepts
Content weakness	Weakness in the education sector	Emphasis on the student survey in the educational material and the weakness of evaluation questions; lack and weakness in diversity in educational standards; The decline in the quality of education due to excessive preoccupation with research; The emergence of a tendency to teach outside the university, even in non-specialized fields; lack of comprehensiveness of criteria designed to evaluate educational activities; limiting educational activities to the required number of educational units; Homogeneity and use of the same assessment tools and forms
	Weakness in the research sector	The remarkable richness of the scores of the research material compared to other materials; Great emphasis on the production of science in the form of SEI and scientific and research articles; Weakness in paying attention to practical and problem-oriented researches; lack of appropriate analytical tools to score the researches; lack of budget management; Inadequacy of society's demand with university productions; Weakness in the commercialization of university research achievements; fundamental ambiguities and problems in the publication of joint articles; fundamental ambiguities in the process of publishing articles extracted from the thesis with the role of supervisor and advisor in them; Imbalance and balance in valuing and scoring between different sections of the research material.
	Weakness in the cultural sector	Lack of clarity of instructions and rules in the field of cultural activity; lack of knowledge and information of faculty members in some cultural fields; Neglecting the subject of discipleship in the cultural, educational and social subject; the immeasurableness of some criteria of the cultural material and the difficulty of scoring it; Inadequacy of the nature of some activities such as editing books and articles with cultural, educational and social content; Lack of attention to educational and social dignity compared to cultural dignity; limiting cultural activities to participation in certain training courses; Neglecting some cultural activities related to the comprehensive plan and document of Islamization of universities
Executive weakness	Weak implementation at the university level	Parallel work in the university; Absence of the compilers of the promotion regulations in its approval meeting; centralization in the promotion system; lack of demotion mechanism for faculty members; Predominance of bureaucratic approach in promotion process; Failure to use expert forces in the academic committees; Intensification of article-oriented culture among the academic community
	Weak implementation at the extra-university level	Lack of interaction and exchange of ideas with other countries; lack of coordination between the society and the university; Failure to use the opinions of all stakeholders of the higher education system when making policies for promotion regulations; Failure to pay attention to other policies when developing the promotion regulations
	Weak implementation of regulations	High work pressure on faculty members at the beginning of the promotion process; lack of motivation; lack of free thinking in the face of science and scientific productions; Eliminating the incentive to present new global ideas; Immorality while writing, evaluating and judging articles; not encouraging the connection between industry and university; lack of commitment of faculty members to localization of science; Requiring faculty members to earn points in all subjects; Failure to pay attention to the participation of faculty members in international activities

DISCUSSION

In universities of medical sciences, the challenges that were more frequent in the studies were selected as the key challenges of the regulations for the promotion of faculty members and were analyzed using statistical evidence:

In a study, faculty members believed that research activities, especially essay writing, are very important (6). The emphasis on research in promotion regulations leads faculty to prioritize short-term, quantity-focused works. Faculty, aiming for higher ranks, allocate time to meet regulation criteria instead of enhancing research quality, fostering an article-oriented culture (21).

In fact, in the processes of selection, recruitment, and promotion of faculty members, research is emphasized more than education (22). Therefore, promoting faculty members should fairly consider both teaching and research. Achieving a balance ensures comprehensive faculty development (23,24). The policy emphasizes quantitative scientometrics over publication quality, leads authors to prioritize quantity. This poses a current challenge as researchers' production

behaviors increasingly favor quantity over quality (25). This recent disaster caused the reward system of science to be disrupted. Because the number of works attributed to one person is more than he deserves (26). Rouhani and Rashidi (27) regulations exhibited a quantitative focus, emphasized numbers like article count, research projects, and books. This compelled postgraduate students to produce articles, boost the country's international index presence. However, it led to insufficient theorizing, improper university-society relations, and various issues in Iran's higher education system, as the consequence of this regulation (28).

Unfortunately, ISI-registered journals and impact factors have fueled competitive pressures among university and faculty. A subtle, overlooked point is that Iranian researchers mainly publish in exact sciences due to their comprehensive nature, though societal problems lie elsewhere. The competition in basic, technical, and medical fields focuses on research results, with the main hypotheses developed elsewhere, emphasizing our role in completing the thought process as a scientific force (29). Ghasemi et al (18) research on the role of Iranian researchers in discredited international publications (2008-

2018) found that among 10 blacklisted journals, the Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences stood out. In 2011-2012, over 70% of its articles, totaling 2000+, were authored by Iranians, with some issues featuring up to eight articles by a single Iranian author. In the study of Safarpour et al. (30), faculty members criticized promotion regulations for overemphasizing research, neglecting education, focusing on research quantity, and favoring ISI articles, among other concerns.

CONCLUSION

The regulations for the promotion of faculty members play a crucial role in guiding the behavior and actions of academics, both students and faculty members. In this research, with a comprehensive review of the research literature in the field of pathology and criticism of regulations, an effort was made to categorize and analyze these injuries. One of the

limitations of this research was the existence of gray literature (plans, books, academic actions other than articles) in this field, which has been neglected. Another limitation was the lack of access to the text of some articles.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical issues including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, redundancy, etc. have been completely observed by the authors.

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Conflict of interest: All authors listed have contributed sufficiently to the project to be included as authors. To the best of our knowledge, no conflict of interest, financial or other, exists.

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