Editing Practice

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The core components and the survey on importance of professional quality of chief editor, editorial director and editor of sci-tech journals in China

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study aims to explore the core elements of the professional quality of the chief editor, editorial director, and editor of sci-tech journals and to analyze the understanding of the importance of the professional quality of the editorial team. **Methods:** The core elements of the professional quality of the chief editor, editorial director, and editor of sci-tech journals are summarized into basic quality, professional quality, comprehensive quality, and excellent quality. They are then defined and explained using the literature research method. In addition, a questionnaire on the core professional quality of the chief editor, editorial director, and editor of sci-tech journals was designed to investigate the cognition status of the importance of professionalism among editors of sci-tech journals. **Results:** The survey results show that editors are the direct executors of journal operations and need to master basic quality and improve professional quality. The editorial director is the main manager of the work of sci-tech journals, and it is necessary to comprehensively strengthen the promotion of various professional qualities. The chief editor is the main person at the helm of the academic quality of sci-tech journals and needs to have a higher academic level and a more rigorous work attitude. They should pay attention to improving professional quality and excellent quality. **Conclusion:** The chief editor, editorial director, and editor of sci-tech journals should focus on different professional quality training specific to their practice. Professional quality evaluation standards should be established to provide a reference for the evaluation system of sci-tech journal editors.

Key words: sci-tech journal, chief editor, editorial director, editor, professional quality

INTRODUCTION

The high-quality development of sci-tech journals needs to rely on excellent publishing teams, and the job responsibilities of different posts determine their different professional requirements.[1] The professional quality of editors is the comprehensive quality that editors must possess in the work of editing and publishing. Editors, editorial directors, and chief editors are the main members of the sci-tech journal publishing team, their responsibilities, contents, emphases, and directions are different in the development of sci-tech journals. The editor is responsible for the specific implementation of the daily work of the journal, the editorial director is responsible for the overall management of the journal and the chief editor is

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responsible for the planning and outlook of the development direction of the journal.[2] Therefore, editors, editorial directors, and chief editors should have different professional quality requirements. Continuously improving the professional quality of the editor, editorial director, and chief editor can give full play to the cohesion, centripetal force, and innovation of the sci-tech journal publishing team, stimulate everyone's enthusiasm for work, and promote the high-level construction of sci-tech journals.

At present, domestic research mainly focuses on the analysis of an editor's professional quality,[3–5] and there are a few studies on the professional quality of an editorial director and chief editor.[6–9] After referring to literature widely home and abroad, the authors have not found any research on the analysis and comparison of the professional quality of editors, editorial directors, and chief editors of sci-tech journals, which shows that there is no unified understanding in journal circles. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the core components of the professional quality of staff in different positions of sci-tech journals and to analyze the importance of these professional qualities, aiming to provide references for talent evaluation, talent echelon construction, performance assessment, and high-quality development of sci-tech journals.

METHODS

Definition of concepts

The responsibilities of editors, editorial directors, and chief editors of sci-tech journals discussed in this paper are set in combination with the actual work of most sci-tech journals, and cannot represent the commonness of all sci-tech journals in China. It is undeniable that the work responsibilities of editors, editorial directors, and chief editors in some sci-tech journals actually overlap and cross each other. Editors, editorial directors, and chief editors shoulder different tasks and responsibilities in the prosperity and development of sci-tech journals. The responsibilities of editors mainly include paper review, editing and proofreading, publication management, author communication, academic exchange, and publicity and promotion.[10–12] The editorial director is responsible for leading the editorial team, managing the daily operation of the editorial department, and formulating the development strategy of the journal. This individual is also the specific leader of the operation, planning, and management of the journal and is in the middle position of being responsible to the chief editor and the editorial board and guiding the editorial work under him.[6] The chief editor is the main person in charge of the work of journal editing, publishing, and distribution. The most important responsibilities of the chief editor in the development of sci-tech journals are to formulate the development goals of the journal, determine the purpose of the journal, set up the editorial committee, select topics and plans, carry out academic organizations, be responsible for the final review of manuscripts, gather the academic community and serve the journal construction.[7]

Literature and interview survey methods

In the early stage, this research group consulted the relevant literature[3,5,8–15] and interviewed three chief editors, editorial directors, and editors of sci-tech journals (natural science journals, medical journals, and human science journals). This paper summarizes the core components of the professional quality of the chief editor, editorial director, and editor of sci-tech journals, including basic quality, professional quality, comprehensive quality, and excellent quality.

Questionnaire survey method

To ensure the scientific design of the questionnaire, this research group consulted the relevant literature in the early stage and combined with the interview results, designed a questionnaire on the core professional quality of the editorial team of sci-tech journals.[16] The specific contents include the basic information of the respondents (gender, age, education, title, and position) and the core professional qualities of editors, editorial directors, and chief editors of sci-tech journals (basic quality, professional quality, comprehensive quality, and excellent quality). The questionnaire questions are in the form of multiple choice, and the professional literacy questions are divided into five levels of importance (extremely minor, minor, average, important and extremely important) using the Likert five-level scoring method, with one to five points assigned respectively. The average score of each item is calculated according to the formula.[17] Through SPSSAU platform analysis (Beijing Green Silk Technology Co., Ltd., China), the standardized Cronbach α coefficient and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of the questionnaire were 0.941 and 0.840, respectively, indicating high reliability and validity.

Data sources

In this study, editors, editorial directors, and chief editors of sci-tech journals were selected as research objects. In December 2022, questionnaires were distributed to members of the Chinese Guangdong Sci-Tech Journal Editors Association and editors of domestic sci-tech journals on WeChat groups. A total of 123 questionnaires were collected, and there were no invalid questionnaires, with a response rate of 100%.

RESULTS

Literature and interview survey results

According to the literature and interview survey results, the core components of the professional quality of

editors, editorial directors, and chief editors of sci-tech journals were summarized, and the specific explanations are shown in Table 1.

Questionnaire survey results

Basic information

The basic information of the respondents included gender (41 males [33.3%] and 82 females [66.7%]); age (aged < 35 years old 22 [17.0%], aged 35–45 years old 55 [44.7%], aged 46–55 years old 34 [27.6%], and aged > 55 years old 12 [9.8%]); the highest degree (undergraduate 39 [31.7%], master 62 [50.4%], and doctorate 22 [7.9%]); editing years (< 5 years 22 [17.9%], 5–10 years 35 [28.5%], 11–20 years 43 [35.0%], and > 20 years 23 [18.7%]); job titles (without job titles 7 [5.7%], junior titles 12 [9.8%], intermediate titles 49 [39.8%], associate senior titles 38 [30.9%], and senior titles 17 [13.8%]); job position (editorial service staffs 4 [3.3%], editors 71 [57.7%], editorial directors including deputy directors 35 [28.5%], and chief editors 13 [10.6%]).

Survey on the importance of editors' core professional qualities

Editors of sci-tech journals are the direct executors of journal operations. Editors with solid professional qualities can ensure the standard of publishing content of sci-tech journals, as well as the academic quality and innovative value of sci-tech journals.[10] According to the questionnaire survey (Table 2), the core professional qualities of editors in order of importance are academic norms checking ability (4.46 points), academic review ability (4.44 points), text editing ability (4.42 points), topic design ability (4.42 points), academic professional knowledge and professional background (4.27 points). The importance of other core professional qualities was insufficient (< 4 points).

Survey on the importance of editorial directors' core professional qualities

The working ability, publishing style, and academic accomplishment of editorial directors of sci-tech journals will greatly affect the development path and academic quality of academic journals, and mastering the correct methods to enhance the influence of journals is an important link to run journals well.[13] The editorial directors should be proficient in management wisdom, lead the editorial department to make harmonious progress, shoulder the responsibility of the core editor, and become experts who understand the subject and editorial science. Table 3 showed that the core professional qualities of editorial directors were of high importance (> 4.00 points). Among them, topic design ability (4.70 points), academic norms checking ability (4.62 points), team management ability (4.62 points), academic review ability (4.58 points), academic professional knowledge and professional background (4.46 points), and periodical and academic influence (4.45 points) were more important.

Survey on the importance of chief editors' core professional qualities

The chief editor is the soul and leader of the development of sci-tech journals, and his academic vision determines the direction of journal development, so he needs to have a higher academic level and a more rigorous attitude toward running journals.[18] According to the questionnaire survey (Table 4), the core professional quality of the chief editor is the periodical and academic influence (4.66 points), academic professional knowledge and professional background (4.65 points), academic review ability (4.63 points), topic design ability (4.63 points), academic norms check ability (4.52 points), team management ability (4.41 points), international promotion ability (4.25 points), and publicity and promotion ability (4.20 points), while other core professional qualities are not highly important (< 4.00 points).

DISCUSSION

Editors should focus on cultivating basic quality and developing professional quality

Editors of sci-tech journals need to do a good job in the basic work of academic quality and publication quality of journals. The ability to edit and revise texts and academic review manuscripts is the basic skill of editors. They have strong word-processing abilities and are familiar with editing work norms.[15] The political orientation, academic quality, and value orientation of the text should be well handled in the first examination. In editing, processing, and proofreading, abide strictly by publication standards, with the spirit of craftsmanship to eliminate errors. At the same time, it is necessary to cultivate the ability to select topics and plan work, collect the research hotspots of this discipline, get to know experts, and plan and organize thematic manuscripts.[15]

The development of the professional quality of sci-tech journal editors is also very important. Academic norms check ability is directly related to the guiding role of journals in the ethical norms of science and technology. Editors will directly face academic misconduct in their actual work, and efforts to learn to identify common violations of academic norms in the profession are the key training direction in terms of editors' professional quality. Professional knowledge and background, and even scientific research ability, are important guarantees of the academic quality of sci-tech journals. Therefore, in addition to existing professional knowledge and background, editors need to strengthen their study of professional knowledge in work practice and constantly improve their professional abilities through further academic studies and exchanges.

Table 1: Explanation on the core components of professional quality of the editorial team of sci-tech journals

Items		Explanation
Basic quality	Text editing ability	The ability to thoroughly review, process, and check manuscripts from content to form
	Academic review ability	The ability to carefully review manuscripts, including the quality, innovation, and originality
	Topic design ability	The ability to develop and implement strategies, policies, and detailed operational plans based on the overall positioning of the journal
Professional quality	Academic norms check ability	The ability to guide and check the construction of academic norms, academic ethics, and scientific research integrity in the academic activities of journal publishing
	Academic professional knowledge and professional background	Have professional knowledge, professional background, and scientific research ability related to sci-tech journals
Comprehensive quality	Digital serviceability	Serviceability mainly include digital thinking, digital production planning, digital content processing, and digital communication operation in the journal publishing work
	International promotion ability	The ability to promote the content and brand of sci-tech journals and arouse the attention, thinking, recognition, and attention of the international academic community
	Publicity and promotion ability	The ability to publicize and promote journal articles and brands through various ways and channels such as academic activities and new media platforms
	Marketing earning ability	The ability to occupy the academic market and develop revenue sources of sci-tech journals by appropriate management and reform models
Excellent quality	Team management ability	The ability to integrate editorial team resources and coordinate team members to achieve the goals set by sci-tech journals
	Periodical and academic influence	The ability to enhance the influence editorial and academic circles through scientific research, publish original results, and promote scientific and technological progress

Table 2: Survey results of the importance of core professional quality of editors of sci-tech journals, *n* (%)

Professional quality	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Common	Important	Very important	Mean
Text editing ability	2 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	58 (47.2)	61 (49.6)	4.42
Academic review ability	1 (0.8)	0	6 (4.9)	53 (43.1)	63 (51.2)	4.44
Topic design ability	1 (0.8)	0	7 (5.7)	53 (43.1)	62 (50.4)	4.42
Academic norms check ability	1 (0.8)	0	5 (4.1)	52 (42.3)	65 (52.9)	4.46
Academic professional knowledge and professional background	0	1 (0.8)	9 (7.3)	69 (56.1)	44 (35.8)	4.27
Digital service ability	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	29 (23.6)	73 (59.4)	18 (14.6)	3.85
International promotion ability	0	5 (4.1)	32 (26.0)	66 (53.7)	20 (16.3)	3.82
Publicity and promotion ability	0	4 (3.3)	26 (21.1)	67 (54.5)	26 (21.1)	3.93
Marketing earning ability	5 (4.1)	16 (13.0)	43 (35.0)	39 (31.7)	20 (16.3)	3.43

Table 3: Survey results of the importance of core professional quality of editorial directors of sci-tech journals, *n* (%)

Professional quality	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Common	Important	Very important	Mean
Text editing ability	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	15 (12.2)	57 (46.3)	48 (39.0)	4.21
Academic review ability	0	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	45 (36.6)	75 (61.0)	4.58
Topic design ability	1 (0.8)	0	2 (1.6)	29 (23.6)	91 (74.0)	4.70
Academic norms check ability	1 (0.8)	0	4 (3.3)	35 (28.5)	83 (67.5)	4.62
Academic professional knowledge and professional background	1 (0.8)	0	4 (3.3)	55 (44.7)	63 (51.2)	4.46
Digital serviceability	2 (1.6)	0	17 (13.8)	66 (53.7)	38 (30.9)	4.12
International promotion ability	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	15 (12.2)	62 (50.4)	44 (35.8)	4.20
Publicity and promotion ability	1 (0.8)	3 (2.4)	11 (8.9)	50 (40.7)	58 (47.2)	4.31
Marketing earning ability	4 (3.3)	2 (1.6)	21 (17.1)	50 (40.7)	46 (37.4)	4.07
Team management ability	1 (0.8)	0	3 (2.4)	37 (30.1)	82 (66.7)	4.62
Periodical and academic influence	1 (0.8)	0	3 (2.4)	58 (47.2)	61 (49.6)	4.45

Editorial directors need to comprehensively improve various professional qualities

As the core manager of the editorial department, the editorial directors should not only be in overall charge but also report to leadership and make known to lower levels, conduct macro-analysis and micro-operation,

Table 4: Survey results of the importance of core professional quality of chief editors of sci-tech journals, *n* (%)

Professional quality	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Common	Important	Very important	Mean
Text editing ability	2 (1.6)	8 (6.5)	28 (22.7)	45 (36.6)	40 (32.5)	3.92
Academic review ability	0	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	40 (32.5)	81 (65.9)	4.63
Topic design ability	0	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	40 (32.5)	81 (65.9)	4.63
Academic norms check ability	0	2 (1.6)	8 (6.5)	37 (30.1)	76 (61.8	4.52
Academic professional knowledge and professional background	0	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	36 (29.3)	84 (68.3)	4.65
Digital serviceability	2 (1.6)	3 (2.4)	35 (28.5)	55 (44.7)	28 (22.8)	3.85
International promotion ability	2 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	17 (13.8)	47 (38.2)	56 (45.5)	4.25
Publicity and promotion ability	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	16 (13.0)	59 (48.0)	46 (37.4)	4.20
Marketing earning ability	4 (3.3)	10 (8.1)	27 (22.0)	47 (38.2)	35 (28.5)	3.80
Team management ability	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	8 (6.5)	46 (37.4)	66 (53.7)	4.41
Periodical and academic influence	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	33 (26.8)	87 (70.7)	4.66

improve journals and train talents.[19] Therefore, editorial directors need to improve their professional quality in an all-round way to analyze the current situation and problems of journals, clarify the development direction and style, and formulate management plans and work processes suitable for journals.[20] The editorial directors play a central role in the "three reviews and three corrections" of sci-tech journals, and their editing and editing ability and academic reviewing ability should have the role of guiding and promoting the editor's learning.[21] In terms of topic design ability, the editorial directors need to take the initiative to adjust the content positioning of the journal, dare to report forward-looking and innovative scientific research results, and focus on planning manuscripts in advantageous disciplines, cutting-edge hot spots and academic cross-fields.

The academic norms check ability of the editorial director should focus more on improving the normative and leading role of journals in scientific and technological ethics, developing the academic normative control process of the editorial department, introducing advanced methods for identifying academic misconduct, educating academic norms and scientific and technological ethics policies, and guiding authors and experts to follow academic norms. As a leader in the operation and management of sci-tech journals, the editorial director should have strong professional knowledge and background, constantly improve their academic and professional abilities, and lead editors to jointly improve their ability to plan innovative topics and appreciate excellent papers.

With the advent of the Omnimedia era, the digital serviceability and publicity and promotion ability of editorial directors need to have higher requirements, promote the transformation and upgrading of journals, reshape the publishing process, establish an Omnimedia platform for sci-tech journals, organize academic circles, build communication platforms and build academic communities.[22] In terms of internationalization promotion ability, editorial directors are required to benchmark world-class scientific and technological journals and learn the internationalization of journals, especially the internationalization of publishing language, publishing standards and peer review.

As the leader of sci-tech journal operation and management, the editorial director should build a good working atmosphere, give full play to the editor's personal strengths and train a reasonable editing echelon to know people well and make full use of their talents. At the same time, we should strive for the right to speak in this discipline. Only by becoming an expert in this discipline can we have better academic exchanges with experts and scholars, have a keen insight into the latest research trends and academic hot spots, and organize and plan high-quality special topics and columns. On the other hand, the editorial director also needs to conduct in-depth research on the knowledge of editing, quickly grasp the international authoritative publishing norms and the latest domestic policy standards and improve his influence in the editorial community.

Chief editors should enhance professional quality and excellent quality

The chief editors of sci-tech journals are mostly top experts in related industries whose professional knowledge and background have advantages that exceed those of other staff members in the editorial department. An excellent chief editor of a sci-tech journal should be both an excellent editor and a great scholar. He should promote the healthy development of the journal with his extensive and profound professional knowledge. He should also promote the improvement of professional scientific research ability through the editorial work of the editing and review school and combine editing and research to facilitate editing.[23]

The chief editor of a scientific journal should not only manage the work of the editorial department but also manage the operation of the editorial committee.[24] It is necessary to encourage the editorial team to maintain its energy and vitality but also to encourage the benign operation of the editorial team. For the editorial team, the chief editors should establish a talent training mechanism and encourage editors to improve themselves through editing and professional field learning. For the editorial committee, the chief editor should establish a performance-oriented quantitative evaluation program, reward excellent editorial committee members, and enhance the sense of honor and mission of them.[25]

The chief editor is the academic soul of sci-tech journals, whose academic influence, scientific research innovation and peer recognition determine the academic level and strategic height of the journals. The academic influence of the chief editor cannot be separated from the establishment of the editorial team, the selection of high-quality articles, the planning of cutting-edge topics and the improvement of journal quality.[8] With profound academic attainments and a spirit of continuous innovation and exploration, strong academic cohesion is formed for sci-tech journals in corresponding professional fields.

CONCLUSION

The core professional quality of editors, editors and chief editors of sci-tech journals is of great value to the cultivation of editing talents, the construction of editing echelons, the performance assessment of editorial departments and the high-quality development of journals. The comprehensive improvement of the overall professional quality of sci-tech journal publishing personnel is not only an important embodiment of the improvement of national cultural soft power but also an important internal reason for the high-quality development of sci-tech journals.[26,27] Strengthen the training and education of core professional qualities, strive to improve basic quality, professional quality, comprehensive quality, and excellent quality, and create a good learning atmosphere so that everyone can learn at work, work in learning, and grow into a learning team.[28] The key to the high-quality construction of sci-tech journals is the construction of a talent team. This is achieved by comprehensively improving the core professional qualities of editors, editorial directors, and chief editors, improving publishing service capabilities, building communication platforms for theoretical innovation and scientific and technological progress, constructing Chinese discourse and narrative systems, promoting the integrated development of sci-tech journals, and promoting the construction of international communication capabilities, constantly adapting to the needs of Chinese cultural construction in the new era.

This study defines and summarizes the core professional qualities that editors, editorial directors and chief editors of sci-tech journals should possess through literature research and analyzes their importance through the questionnaire survey. However, the sample size of the questionnaire survey in this study is not large, which may affect the quality of the result. In the future, the core professional qualities of editors, editorial directors, and chief editors will inevitably change against the background of the widespread use of generative artificial intelligence, and the core professional qualities mentioned in this study also need to be constantly updated. In the follow-up research, we will assign values to each professional accomplishment, establish quantitative evaluation criteria, increase the sample size, and further improve the questionnaire survey results to provide references for the establishment of the talent evaluation system for sci-tech journal editors.

DECLARATIONS

Author contributions

Wu JJ: Design the research ideas, design the paper framework, draft the paper, revise the paper, and review the final draft. Yu J: Design the research plan, questionnaire design, and evaluation, implement the research process, and participate in the revision of the paper. Fang YC: Collect, collect and analyze data, draw pictures and participate in writing papers. Wang JZ: Research program feasibility investigation and analysis, literature research and sorting, review and revision of papers. Xu J: Propose research directions, design research ideas, review and revise papers. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Ethical approval

Not applicable.

Conflict of interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

Data availability statement

Data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author at yujing@mail.sysu.edu.cn.

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