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Academic favoritism at work: insider bias in Turkish national journals

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Abstract
The study utilizes a unique dataset of 16,575 research papers published in 68 national Business and Economics journals to investigate editorial bias towards insiders in Turkish academia. The study questions insiders' motive for their choice of journal and predicts faster acceptance for papers that contain insider authors relative to the outsider papers in anticipation of favorable editorial treatment. The findings show that insiders not only publish in large numbers in their affiliated institutions' journals but also do so at significantly faster speeds. Specifically, 4938 (29.79% of) papers have at least one insider author, and they are accepted 41.5 days faster than the average outsider submission. Papers in English, junior professors, and new-generation university journals are less likely to have insider authors; while papers in Turkish, senior professors, old-generation university journals, and papers originating from graduate theses are more likely. Remarkably, national journals indexed in ESCI do not engage in editorial favoritism towards insiders and require considerably longer time to accept submissions. As Turkish universities are leading publishers of academic journals, the findings have important implications for the Turkish academia. We note a declining trend of insider authorship and provide suggestions to mitigate insider bias.

Keywords Editorial bias · Insider bias · Editorial favoritism · Turkish academia · Turkish journals

Mathematics Subject Classification 91

JEL Classifications G14 · I23 · I28

Introduction

This research aims to investigate editorial bias towards insiders in Turkish national journals. In particular, the study is interested in the determinants of insidership, and the speed advantage provided by the bias to insiders. It is widely acknowledged that journals' article

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selection process may have certain biases such as institutional affiliation bias, ideological bias, gender bias, nationality bias, publication bias, newcomer bias, and new idea bias (Peters & Ceci, 1982; Ernst & Kienbacher, 1991; Wenneras & Wold, 1997; Ross et al., 2006; Yegros & Amat, 2009; Ceci & Williams, 2011; Franco et al., 2014; van Lent et al., 2014; Manchikanti et al., 2015; Seeber & Bacchelli, 2017; Tivina et al., 2019; Blanco-Perez & Brodeur, 2020; Mrowinski et al., 2020; Squazzoni et al., 2021). Particularly noteworthy is the editorial bias or favoritism towards insiders due to editors' position of authority. Editorial stance is crucial to the fate of submissions because; (i) Editors decide whether to send a submission to peer review or desk reject it; (ii) Select reviewers and therefore play a role in creating potential peer review bias; (iii) Interpret reports of reviewers and make the final decision (Sarigöl et al., 2017). The existence of editorial favoritism towards their networks is acknowledged (Lutmar & Reingewertz, 2021; Medoff, 2003; Xu et al., 2021; Yoon, 2013), and even accepted as compensation for maintaining journal quality and prestige (Laband & Piette, 1994). While a strand of researchers views editorial favoritism as a pursuit to identify the highest-quality articles due to competition between editors (Medoff, 2003), others tend to view it as an inefficient way to publish substandard articles of close friends and colleagues at the expense of journal quality (Laband & Piette, 1994; Yoon, 2013). The proponents of the quality argument typically reach this conclusion in a sample of top-ranking journals that have some of the strictest quality standards. The authors argue that the latter is more likely with regards to Turkish national journals due to their lack of international recognition. As none of the Turkish national journals have an impact factor, editors are unlikely to exhibit favoritism behavior to attract high-quality articles and increase journal prestige.

Adopting the view that editorial favoritism in Turkish national journals is unrelated to the pursuit of high-quality research, this study argues that insider bias is associated with rent-seeking motives and faster acceptance. Insider bias is defined as favorable treatment of authors who are affiliated with the university that publishes the journal, following Laband and Piette (1994) and Yoon (2013). It differs from affiliation bias which involves favoring prominent researchers and institutions (Peters & Ceci, 1982), due to the inherent moral hazard in editorial review. The moral hazard stems from inability of editors to deliver a rejection or major revision decision to fellow academics at the same institution fearing alienation and blowback, which tampers with the editorial neutrality and independence. In contrast to a large fraction of the literature that examines favoritism and peer review bias within a single-blind review process (e.g., Sarigöl et al., 2017; Teplitskiy et al., 2018), double-blind review is a pre-requisite for inclusion in Turkey's national TR-DIZIN index. Double blinding anonymizes both author and reviewer identity, thus mitigating several types of bias associated with reviewers. This leaves journal editors as the sole persons in possession of author identity, and consequently the main source of favoritism.

Turkey provides an ideal setting to investigate rent-seeking behavior of insiders because of several contributing factors. First, the academic promotion regulations encourage national publications over international ones through disproportionally rewarding them relative to the highly regarded Web of Science and Scopus indexed journals. New regulations introduced in December 2016 stipulate publication of at least three research papers in national journals. The mandatory provision is controversial as it empowers national journals at the expense of internationally recognized ones. Although regulations recognize the higher quality of Web of Science journals by giving them a performance score 2.5 times that of national journals, the score is not large enough in terms of the relative effort and time required to undertake high-quality research. Research shows that publishing in low-quality or predatory journals gives researchers career advantage over those opting

for high-quality research when the latter has negative reward (Pyne, 2017). Second, the performance-based academic incentive scheme launched in 2015 led to an explosion in the number of publications as academics attempted to take shortcuts to meet performance targets. Third, Turkish state universities, faculties and social science institutes almost always publish their own journals in the absence of large private academic publishers. Publishing own journal provides soft power within academic circles and potential career benefits for the affiliated academic staff such as ability to rapidly publish a manuscript to meet the expected performance criteria. Fourth, the Turkish setting allows a clear insider definition through institutional affiliation of authors and journals.

Motivated by the setting, this research questions insiders' choice of journal and predicts a preferential editorial treatment leading to shorter time-to-acceptance for insiders compared to outsiders. The insiders' selection of the affiliated university journal is interesting because there are dozens of other national journals that would fit their scope of research. An explanation for this choice could be that insiders follow a pecking order of submissions, prioritizing their own university journal and moving to other journals if they get rejected.[1] The study attempts to identify determinants of insidership and argues that the Turkish setting encourages academics to activate and use insider networks in pursuit of rapid publications. Particularly worthy of attention is the point-based academic promotion criteria that prioritize quantity over quality, while the academic incentive scheme provides additional catalyst. Past research questions ability of Turkish scholars to publish in Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) journals (Karadag, 2021; Onder & Erdil, 2015; Onder et al., 2008). This study explores a new dimension by focusing on national journals and the insider bias inherent within editorial decisions.

The data consist of 16,575 research papers published between 2014 and 2020 by 68 Business and Economics journals owned by public universities. The analysis reveals substantial insider presence and advantage. 4938 (29.79% of) papers and 7492 (26.92% of) authors are identified as insiders, and their preferential editorial treatment causes a 41.5-day (36-day) average (median) speed advantage over outsiders. Senior academics, papers in Turkish and papers originating from graduate theses are associated with larger insidership, while junior academics, non-academics and papers in English are associated with lower insidership. As predicted, insidership is associated with shorter time-to-acceptance and the selection bias of editors is significant. Special issues (1614 papers, 9.78% of the sample) accept papers considerably faster than regular issues regardless of the author origin. Outsiders are primary beneficiaries of this as their time-to-acceptance is nearly halved. On the other hand, outsiders submitting to regular issues (10,535 papers, 63.56% of the sample) and in particular, those writing in English (1515 papers, 9.14% of the sample) are the least privileged authors and experience the longest time-to-acceptance. These results indicate that article selection process of national journals is biased not only towards insiders but also special issues and papers in Turkish, giving them speed advantage over majority of submissions.

This research is expected to contribute extensively to the literature. It extends prior research on editorial favoritism and insider bias (Laband & Piette, 1994; Lutmar & Reingewertz, 2021; Medoff, 2003; Sarigöl et al., 2017; Teplitskiy et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2021; Yoon, 2013) and provides the first evidence on the practices of Turkish national journals. As Turkish universities are leading publishers of academic journals, the findings

[1] Authors thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this explanation.

have important implications for the Turkish academia. The results provide a tangible basis to discuss academic promotion regulations, publication tendency of academics, indexing requirements and non-transparent practices of national journals. The policy aim of the study is to mitigate insider advantage in Turkish academia by encouraging changes to the main sources of this bias, i.e., academic promotion regulations and the national TR-DIZIN index. The regulations should be designed to offer a more balanced reward-to-effort ratio for publications, as current regulations promote national journals at the expense of the well-known international ones. Moreover, the publisher of the TR-DIZIN index should employ expert subject editors and execute a robust editorial quality assessment. Finally, the study aims to encourage national journal editors to adopt a transparent and informative approach and disclose vital journal statistics such as number of submissions, acceptance ratio, and time-to acceptance as none of the journals provides this information.

The rest of the study is as follows: Sect. 2 reviews the literature, sources of editorial and peer review biases and develops hypotheses. Section 3 presents data, research design and explains methodology. Section 4 presents and discusses results. Section 5 discusses policy implications. Section 6 makes concluding remarks.

Literature review

Editorial and peer review biases

Academic journals employ peer review to obtain an objective assessment on the scientific validity of the submissions. The review is, however, prone to certain biases that impair the neutrality of the process. Biases can arise in every aspect of the process, from the self-imposed publication bias prior to submission (Franco et al., 2014; Manchikanti et al., 2015; van Lent et al., 2014) to selection bias of editors (Matias-Guiu & Garcia-Ramos, 2011; Moustafa, 2015; Tivina et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2016), self-publication bias (Xu et al., 2021), and reviewer bias (Ross et al., 2006; Teplitskiy et al., 2018). The biases may stem from ideological disagreement and personal competition with the author, weakness of the findings (Blanco-Perez & Brodeur, 2020), author demographics such as researchers' country of origin (Hsiehchen & Espinoza, 2016; Matias-Guiu & Garcia-Ramos, 2011; Yousefi-Nooraie et al., 2006) or their affiliations (Peters & Ceci, 1982; Tivina et al., 2019). While biases are widely pronounced in almost every stage of publication process, editorial biases are arguably the most critical as editors conduct the initial review before inviting reviewers, appoint reviewers and make the final acceptance decision (Sarigöl et al., 2017). Editors are able to facilitate publication of submissions by their friends or their close networks regardless of quality, and biased editorial behavior towards authors has a large impact on the performance of peer review (Wang et al., 2016; Yoon, 2013). This research investigates editorial bias towards insiders who are affiliated with the journal editor's institution. If editors employ selective treatment of authors based on their institutional affiliations, they will pay particular attention to insider submissions and accept their papers faster. A portion of the researchers attribute insider bias to a competition between top ranked journals' editors and the pursuit of attracting high-quality publications (Laband & Piette, 1994; Medoff, 2003), while others find that editorial favoritism towards insiders lead to lower quality publications and insiders submit their lesser-impact research to affiliated journals, expecting an easier treatment by editors there (Lutmar & Reingewertz, 2021; Yoon, 2013). Laband and Piette (1994) argue that publishing substandard research of friends and acquaintances

is a way to compensate editors for their hard work in maintaining journal quality. The quality argument is, however, not applicable to the Turkish setting, where no national journals in the Business and Economics areas has impact factor and journal editors do not seek high-quality submissions. Besides, regulations officially recognize that national journals are inferior to Web of Science and Scopus journals, as they are rewarded with lower performance scores. Therefore, the authors hold up the latter view that insider behavior carries rent-seeking motives such as meeting performance targets for academic promotion.

Academic inbreeding

Publishing research through affiliated mediums constitutes a form of inbreeding, a term used to describe employment of own graduate students as academic staff and often referred in negative terms because it tends to be associated with unproductive academic conduct (Altbach et al., 2015; Horta, 2013; Horta et al., 2010; Inanc & Tuncer, 2011; Navarro & Rivero, 2001a). Countries worldwide differ in their treatment of inbreeding. While it is perceived negatively in leading institutions in the US (Inanc & Tuncer, 2011), it is common practice and perceived normal in other countries despite the negative impact on scientific output (Altbach et al., 2015; Navarro & Rivero, 2001a). The faculty positions in the US, UK, Australia and Germany exhibit some of the lowest inbreeding ratios around the world, while inbred academics occupy the majority of positions in European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, Austria and France (Navarro & Rivero, 2001a, 2001b; Smyth & Mishra, 2014), and in Asian countries such as China, Japan and Korea (Cruz-Castro & Sanz-Menendez, 2010). In Turkey, academics in public universities are civil servants and as a result they are often employed by the same institution where they served as research assistant and completed their doctoral degree. Turkish universities often favor their own graduates for new faculty positions (Inanc & Tuncer, 2011) and the difficulty of switching to another university often means that the inbred academic is entrenched at the institution for the long-term. This comes with side effects such as promoting scientific stagnancy (Horta et al., 2010) and limiting exchange of ideas (Inanc & Tuncer, 2011). This study explores a new form of inbreeding: publications by insider academics. The negative arguments presented for inbreeding are also valid for insiders submitting to their affiliated institution's journal. Although it is part of the academic culture to publish in own faculty journal, Turkish academics often view their institution's journal as a medium to easily fulfill performance targets without going through the exhausting peer review by alien academics. In this setting, insider publications can set the stage for academic inbreeding and entrenchment if they are used to meet performance targets for appointments.

Academic environment in Turkey and hypotheses

Favoritism towards local authors is observed in many other countries. For example, Ernst and Kienbacher (1991) find that nationality of journals is associated with nationality of authors. In an analysis of postdoctoral applications in Sweden, Wenneras and Wold (1997) document a friendship bonus in the assessment of applications when the applicant is connected to a committee member. Mrowinski et al. (2020) show that submissions from local Serbian authors are accepted faster than external authors. Ross et al. (2006) find peer review bias in the open reviews of abstracts favoring authors from English speaking countries such as the UK and US. Lutmar and Reingewertz (2021) show that academics at Harvard send their lesser-impact papers to their university journal. Laband and Piette (1994) even argue

that editorial favoritism towards local networks is part of a compensation package. Turkey provides an interesting setting to investigate insider publications due to absence of quality motive in editorial favoritism and systemic factors contributing to insider behavior. There are well over 100 Business and Economics journals indexed by TR-DIZIN, thus we question the motives of academics for singling out the journal published by their employer to submit their manuscript. We argue that this selection behavior stems from their reluctance to leave comfort zones in the belief that that they will receive better treatment within this jurisdiction (Lutmar & Reingewertz, 2021), and from the fact that national publications are encouraged by the regulations.

The national TR-DIZIN index was launched in 1992, 19 years after the launch of SSCI by Thomson Reuters. It currently indexes 672 Turkish national journals in the Social Sciences area, compared to over 3400 journals covered by SSCI. The national index has its own evaluation criteria and requires assessment by at least two referees. The journals are monitored up to two years following the application before they are approved. The evaluation criteria explicitly state that: "The diversity of the institutions and authors in the articles published in the journal should be taken into consideration", a reference to the insider publication behavior. As part of the wider higher education policy to promote national research, new academic promotion regulations introduced in December 2016 began to stipulate national publications (UAK, 2016). The effort to promote national index is a direct challenge to the domination of knowledge production by the global North, a reference to the countries and centers of power in the current scientific research and publishing system, alongside similar efforts such as creation of Latindex for Latin American countries, and other emerging circuits of knowledge in Brazil and South Africa (Collyer, 2018). In the current system, academics have to collect minimum 100 points to apply for associate professorship and re-collect these points in the span of five years to apply for full professorship. There are certain mandatory activities such as publishing at least three papers in national journals, two book chapters, and participating in conferences. Each activity is assigned points based on the assessment criteria announced by the Inter University Council (UAK). The criteria recognize differences in the quality of publications, and assign points based on the quality and ranking of the journal. However, they fall short of sufficiently recognizing the differences between SSCI and national journals. Currently, a research paper receives 20 points if published in a SSCI journal, and 8 points if published in a TR-DIZIN journal. The reward-to-effort ratio is substantially in favor of national publications despite SSCI publications receiving a higher score, given the fact that writing high-quality research papers is time-consuming and SSCI publication is voluntary. When the system encourages lower quality publications in terms of actual time and ability required vis-a-vis higher quality ones, academics tend to opt for the former (Muller, 2017). Onder and Erdil (2015) show that 80.3% of all Business academics has zero SSCI publication. Onder et al. (2008) state that promotion and reward schemes adopted by regulators force Turkish scholars to behave opportunistically to maximize their reward and target journals with less stringent acceptance criteria. Moreover, the academic incentive scheme launched in 2015 served as a catalyst for the explosion in national publications because it rewarded quantity more than quality (Demir, 2018). Concurrently, journals with less stringent acceptance criteria and poor peer review process proliferated (Akca & Akbulut, 2018). Regulations inevitably lead academics to seek ways to increase their academic productivity and rapidly publish as many papers as possible, a pursuit that national journals can provide. Since insiders eventually aim for a rapid publication to reap benefits for their journal choice, a negative relationship is predicted between insider authorship and time-to-acceptance below.

H1 Insider authorship is inversely associated with time-to-acceptance.

Eventually, insiders rely on their connections to publish. Given the fact that the level of professional connectedness is often related to the job seniority, we predict more senior academics to be more likely to have established insider networks and use them to publish. Moreover, senior academics are likely to advise a larger number of graduate students. The regulations also stipulate that doctoral students publish from their thesis before graduation, which may lead both students and advisors to seek a rapid publication for their mutual benefit. Likewise, more established old-generation universities founded before 2006 are the places that connections are arguably most useful, whereas new universities and their academics are less likely to have established networks. Therefore, a negative relationship between new-generation university journals and insidership is predicted. Finally, English language is identified as a potential factor affecting insider authorship as proficiency of English affects the journal choice. For example, Kurt (2018) shows that authors with poor English skills avoid prestigious journals assuming that they will be rejected. English requirement is one of the most controversial aspects of the academic promotion criteria, many candidates struggling to obtain the required 65 points, which was eventually reduced to 55 in 2018 due to the growing backlog of candidates. Highlighting this fact, 86.8% of all papers in the sample is written in Turkish and only 12.8% in English. Therefore, the knowledge of English is utilized as a proxy for openness to other journals and authors proficient enough to write a scholarly essay in English are arguably less likely to stay within their comfort zone and submit their research to the affiliated university journal. The hypotheses below predict significant relationship between insider authorship and factors discussed above.

H2 Academic seniority of the authors is positively associated with insider authorship.

H3 The English language is negatively associated with insider authorship.

H4 New generation university journals are negatively associated with insider authorship.

H5 Research papers originating from graduate theses are positively associated with insider authorship.

Data and research design

This study covers the population of journals that follow the selection criteria below. The reasons for the selection filters are presented immediately afterwards. i) The dataset covers the period between 2014 and 2020 for three reasons: The national journal database Dergipark was founded in 2013, academic incentive scheme was launched in 2015 to reward prolific authors, and academic promotion regulations were updated in 2016 to emphasize national publications. The dataset intends to cover all these events to correctly reflect publication attitude and maintain minimal data attrition; ii) Journal must be published by a Turkish state university. This is required to formally identify insider authors through their affiliation to the university as either academic staff or postgraduate student; iii) Journal must be covered by the national TR-DIZIN index for at least two consecutive years. This

requirement is necessary to apply a quality assessment filter to the journals, as un-indexed journals are not subject to the TR-DIZIN criteria such as double-blind review by at least two referees; iv) The journal must be listed under either Business or Economics categories by the TR-DIZIN index. Most journals are listed in both categories. The general Social Science area is not considered to maintain a homogenous sample in terms of content and peer review; however, a few journals accept submissions from the general Social Sciences area and our sample inevitably includes these papers; v) The journal must have its issues available in Dergipark. This is required to securely source all data and maintain an unbiased sample.

These selection criteria result in 68 journals published by 46 universities and 16,575 research papers. Every effort is made to construct a bias-free sample. All data is hand-collected from publicly available sources and available upon request. We purposefully omit university journals outside the scope of TR-DIZIN. It is common practice for non-established journals to publish research from the close networks of editors and academic staff to fill regular issues until they have the recognition to go nationwide. TR-DIZIN index provides this recognition label as it is promoted by the regulations.

Insider definition

We define insider as someone who is currently affiliated to the university that owns the journal through employment or study, following Laband and Piette (1994) and Yoon (2013). These people are likely to have connections and means of accessing journal editors, an outreach that is highly unlikely for most outsiders. Although we cannot rule out the existence of well-connected and informed outsiders,[2] these informal affiliations cannot be quantified and tested. Due to our inability to incorporate informal networks to insider definition and application of quality filters to the data, we argue that this study employs a conservative insider definition, and its findings are likely to be an understatement of the real extent and impact of insider networks in the Turkish academia.

List of journals and summary statistics

The list of 68 journals covered by this study and their most important statistics, namely number of papers published, number of insider papers, overall time-to-acceptance, insider ratio, disclosure ratio, mean and median TIME differences between insider and outsider papers are presented in the Appendix. Turkish journals tend not to be transparent about their editorial practices and information about their review process is rare. Therefore, the statistics provided in the Appendix will shed light on an important issue. Although we acknowledge that the statistics represent only accepted papers; and therefore, positively skewed; they are still expected to shed light on the shadowy editorial practice as none of the covered journals publish their metrics such as the number of submissions received, rejection ratio, time-to-first decision, and time-to-acceptance. In fact, one of the aims of this research is to enhance transparency and accountability of national journals by making the TR-DIZIN index to formally require journals to disclose these statistics. Out of 16,575

[2] For example, 8 of the 18 (44.4% of) papers accepted in 0 day are outsiders, and 4 of the 11 (36.4% of) papers accepted in 1 day are outsiders, supporting our argument that the employed insider definition is conservative.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Median	25th	75th	Min	Max	N
TIME (days)	142.8	112	57	195	0	970	11,821
INSIDER	0.2979	0	0	1	0	1	4938
INSIDERRATIO	0.2692	0	0	0.5	0	1	16,575
SPECIAL	0.0978	0	0	0	0	1	1614
ENGLISH	0.128	0	0	0	0	1	2122
NEWGENERATION	0.1924	0	0	0	0	1	3190
ESCI	0.0375	0	0	0	0	1	619
AUTHOR	1.7080	2	1	2	1	11	16,575
PROFESSOR	0.1812	0	0	0	0	1	3004
ASCPROF	0.2308	0	0	0	0	1	3825
ASTPROF	0.4592	0	0	1	0	1	7632
ASTLECT	0.3677	0	0	1	0	1	6095
NONACADEMIC	0.0898	0	0	0	0	1	1489
THESIS	0.1086	0	0	0	0	1	1800

TIME shows the time from submission to acceptance where declared. INSIDER is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if at least one of the authors currently works or studies at the university that publishes the journal, 0 otherwise. INSIDERRATIO is calculated as number of insider authors divided by number of all authors in the paper. SPECIAL is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the paper is published in a special issue, 0 otherwise. ENGLISH is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the paper is written in English, 0 otherwise. NEWGENERATION is a dummy variable equal to 1 if journal's owner university is founded after 2006, 0 otherwise. ESCI is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the paper is published in one of the three journals indexed by ESCI (Ege Academic Review, Eskisehir Osmangazi Universitesi IIBF Dergisi, Istanbul Business Research), 0 otherwise. AUTHOR variable equals to the number of authors in a paper. PROFESSOR: Full professor author, ASCPROF: Associate professor author, ASTPROF: assistant professor author, ASTLECT: Research assistant and/or lecturer author. NONACADEMIC: Non-academic, student or unidentified author title. THESIS is a dummy that equals 1 of the paper is part of a postgraduate thesis, 0 otherwise. 2122 (12.8% of) papers are in English, 14,394 (86.8% of) papers are in Turkish, and 59 (0.35% of) papers are in other languages

papers, 4938 (29.79%) have insider author(s). Most of the journals appear to have a tendency to publish insider papers and publish them faster than outsider papers. The insider ratio ranges from 1.42% to 64.49% across journals, and journal-specific time-to-acceptance (TIME) differences between insiders and outsiders can be up to 271 days. The average (median) TIME difference per paper is 41.5 (36) days in favor of insiders. To focus on the overall picture, we do not single out and comment on specific journal statistics. An interesting finding is that some of the largest and established university journals appear to treat insiders more favorably, either in terms of insider ratios and acceptance speed, or both. In the Results section, we document a positive association between more established universities, higher ranked academics and insidership, i.e., the likelihood of having an insider. Note that all TIME-related tests and statistics are based on the 11,841 papers that disclose submission and acceptance date information.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the sample. The average (median) TIME is 142.8 (112) days. While the fastest papers are accepted on the day they are submitted, it takes 970 days for the slowest paper to get accepted. INSIDER and INSIDERRATIO statistics demonstrate that 29.79% of the (4938) papers contain insider author, and 26.92% of all authors are insiders. The remaining 11,637 (70.21%) of the papers are authored by

outsiders. 9.78% of the (1614) papers are published in special issues, 12.8% of the papers (2122) are written in English, and 19.24% of the papers (3190) are published in new generation journals. A minority of articles (619 papers, 3.75%) is published in ESCI indexed journals. At the first glance, the job seniority appears to be inversely related to academic productivity as there is a declining order in the number of publications towards higher-ranked academics. We find that assistant professors publish almost twice as much as associate professors, and over 2.5 times full professors. 45.92% of the authors are assistant professors while merely 18.12% of the authors is full professors. However, these statistics need to be compared with the total number of academic staff employed by Turkish universities as their assessment in isolation could be misleading. 20,884 professors, 18,071 associate professors, and 41,586 assistant professors are employed as of June 2021. The adjusted publication statistics are 0.14, 0.21, and 0.18 papers per academic, respectively. This shows that the relationship between productivity and seniority is non-linear, professors being the least and associate professors the most productive.

Methodology

The research conducts both univariate and multivariate analysis. In the initial step, individual features of papers are compared to seek significant TIME differences induced between insiders and outsiders, special and regular issues, different academic titles, English and Turkish language papers, established old and young new generation universities. The two-sample unpaired t-tests and Mann–Whitney tests are conducted for the significance of differences. Then variables from these individual dimensions are utilized to conduct multivariate analysis for the determinants of insidership and TIME. Probit, ordinary least squares (OLS), and two-step Heckman regressions are employed to identify significant determinants. The probit regressions attempt to capture the likelihood of having insider author(s) in accepted papers. OLS regressions are used to identify determinants of TIME and investigate the linear relationship between TIME and insidership. Finally, a Heckman correction is employed to account for the insider selection as OLS estimates would be biased in the presence of selection bias, i.e., if journals selectively treat insiders more favorably.

The models have two dependent variables: INSIDER and LOGTIME. INSIDER is a dummy variable that is equal to 1 of the paper includes authors who work or study at the journal's owner university at the time of submission, 0 otherwise. LOGTIME is the natural logarithm of one plus time-to-acceptance in days. Full model equations with independent variables may be written as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} INSIDER = {} & ENGLISH + NEWGENERATION + PROFESSOR \\ & + ASCPROF + ASTPROF + NONACADEMIC + THESIS + ESCI \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

$$\begin{aligned} LOGTIME = {} & INSIDER(INSIDERRATIO) + SPECIAL + ENGLISH + NEWGENERATION \\ & + PROFESSOR + THESIS + ESCI + (InverseMills) \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

The Eq. (1) is employed in the probit estimates and becomes the selection equation for Heckman. Equation 2 is used in the OLS estimates. Heckman regressions require at least one variable that is not present in the outcome equation to be included in the selection equation. Variables that are likely to affect the probability of being an insider are included in the first stage; these variables are: ENGLISH, NEWGENERATION, PROFESSOR,

Table 2 Time-to-acceptance (days)

	All	Insider	Outsider	Differences Insider vs. Outsider
Panel A: All issues (N: 11,841, Insider: 3393, Outsider: 8448)				
Mean	142.8	113.15	154.66	– 41.5*** (17.58)
Median	112	84	120	– 36*** [19.75]
Panel B: Regular issues (N:10,732, Insider: 3028, Outsider: 7704)				
Mean	148.4	116.62	160.9	– 44.3*** (17.52)
Median	118	86	130	– 44*** [19.86]
Panel C: Special issues (N: 1109, Insider: 365, Outsider: 744)				
Mean	88.23	90.12	84.37	6 (1.11)
Median	61	62.5	58	4.5* [1.77]
Panel D: Regular vs. Special issue differences (N: 11,841)				
Mean	60.2*** (16.39)	26.5*** (6.54)	76.5*** (11.76)	
Median	67*** [19.05]	23.5*** [9.85]	72*** [14.77]	
Panel E: ESCI Journals (N: 350, Insider: 33, Outsider: 317)				
Mean	238.2	204.5	241.8	– 37.3 (n.s.)
Median	224.5	187	228	– 41 [n.s.]

Statistics are based on 11,841 observations in Panel A, 10,732 observations in Panel B and 1109 observations in Panel C, which disclose the submission and acceptance time of the paper. Including the non-disclosing issues, the number of observations is 16575, 14,961, and 1614, respectively. 512 (31.7% of) papers in special issues have insider author(s). t-values in parentheses, z-values in brackets. ***, and * represent significance at 1% and 10% levels. n.s. means not significant. Negative (positive) TIME statistics show shorter (longer) editorial and peer review process until acceptance for insiders and regular issues

ASCPROF, ASTPROF, NONACADEMIC, and year dummies because the insider ratio varies over time. The outcome equation in Eq. 2 includes INSIDER, SPECIAL, NEWGENERATION, PROFESSOR, and THESIS as independent variables. An ESCI variable is added to both models to control for the quality of three journals indexed by Web of Science. Finally, an Inverse Mills ratio calculated from the first stage probit in Eq. (1) is included in the model to account for insider selection. The existence of selection bias and suitability of Heckman model can be assessed through significance of this ratio.

Results and discussion

This section tests the hypotheses and attempts to identify factors that determine the speed of acceptance and the likelihood of being an insider. It starts by presenting overall time-to-acceptance (TIME) statistics in Table 2. Panel A displays statistics for the overall sample and shows a significantly shorter TIME for insiders. While the overall sample mean (median) TIME is 142.8 (112) days, insiders are accepted in 113.15 (84) days compared to 155.66 (120) days for outsiders. The differences translate into a significant 41.5 (36) day average (median) advantage for insiders. In Panel B through Panel D, the sample is divided into regular and special issues to investigate potential differences in their speed of acceptance. The sub-sample analysis shows that insider advantage stems from regular issue papers and disappears in special issues. Interestingly, special issues provide an avenue to publish at considerably faster speeds compared to regular issues without regard to

Table 3 Insider ratios across different TIME horizons

	< 1-week	< 1-month	< 2-month	< 3-month	< 6-month	> 6-month	> 1-year	All
All	142	1294	3225	4946	8476	3364	687	11,841
Insider	76	558	1267	1830	2738	655	101	3393
Outsider	66	736	1958	3116	5739	2709	586	8448
Insider ratio (%)	53.52	43.12	39.28	37	32.3	19.47	14.7	28.65

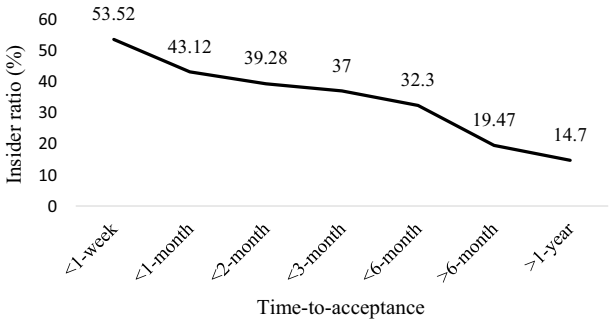

Fig. 1 Insider ratios by time-to-acceptance

the origin of authors. Their speed is demonstrated by the highly significant 60.2 (67) day mean (median) TIME reduction compared to regular issues. Outsiders are the primary benefactors of this unbiased treatment as their TIME is nearly halved. Special issues are often published in support of the national conferences. Interpreted through this lens, the findings suggest that academics are able to gain TIME advantage by participating in conferences and submitting to affiliated journal special issues. In this setting, editors would be willing to forgo the insider favoritism to encourage wider conference participation. Panel E shows statistics for ESCI publications. As ESCI is the top-ranked recognition in our sample of national journals, these journals are likely to publish some of the highest-quality research at the national scale. We find that ESCI publications have a much lower 9.3% insider ratio, and a much larger 238.2-day average TIME compared to other national publications. Remarkably, insiders in ESCI journals also endure long publication times, 50 days more than the average outsider in national journals. These large differences in insider ratio and TIME lead us to infer that top-ranked journals engage less in editorial favoritism and demand more time and effort from authors. An unbiased editorial review should strive to ensure equal treatment of all authors. The results indicate that national journals overall exhibit significant insider bias and fail to treat authors equally, with the exception of few journals.

Table 3 shows percentage insider ratios by the speed of acceptance. The fastest papers accepted in less than 1-week have 53.52% insider ratio, which declines to 43.12% for papers accepted in 1-month, 39.23% in 2-month, 37% in 3-month, and eventually to 14.7% for papers accepted in over 1-year. The negative correlation between TIME and insider ratio is more clearly visible in Fig. 1. The relationship is very linear as the insider ratio monotonically declines with the increase in TIME length. Table 3 and Fig. 1 provide further evidence of editorial bias that provides advantage to insiders. The results so far lend substantial support to H1 that insidership is associated with shorter time-to-acceptance.

Table 4 Author statistics and insider ratios across years

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	All
Panel A: Author distribution								
All	1552	1540	2105	2079	2815	3136	3348	16,575
Insider	518	517	746	694	838	810	815	4938
Outsider	1034	1023	1359	1385	1977	2326	2533	11,637
Insider ratio (%)	33.37	33.57	35.44	33.38	29.77	25.83	24.34	29.79
Outsider ratio (%)	66.63	66.43	64.56	66.62	70.23	74.17	75.66	71.21
Panel B: Time-to-acceptance (TIME): Means								
All	177	157	136	135	131	147	151	142
Insider	151	135	103	103	105	119	122	113
Outsider	190	168	156	151	142	156	161	155
Insider vs. outsider	− 39	− 33**	− 53***	− 48***	− 37***	− 37***	− 39***	− 42***
	(− 1.29)	(2.12)	(− 6.89)	(− 7.99)	(− 6.86)	(− 8.18)	(− 6.95)	(− 17.58)
Panel C: Time-to-acceptance (TIME): Medians								
All	137	120	101	100	91	121	123	112
Insider	122	95	75	74	71	90	92	84
Outsider	142	130	122	120	101	130	133	120
Insider vs. outsider	− 20	− 35***	− 47***	− 46***	− 30***	− 40***	− 41***	− 36***
	[− 0.81]	[− 3.52]	[− 6.79]	[− 9.46]	[− 7.13]	[− 9.19]	[− 9.42]	[− 19.86]
N	113	307	995	1580	2480	3034	3332	11,841
% TIME disclosure	7.28	19.93	47.26	76	88.1	96.75	99.5	71.43

Numbers are rounded up to the closest number. Negative numbers indicate shorter TIME for insiders. t-values in parentheses, z-values in brackets. N shows the number of total observations included in the calculation of means and medians. ***, **, and * show significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% level

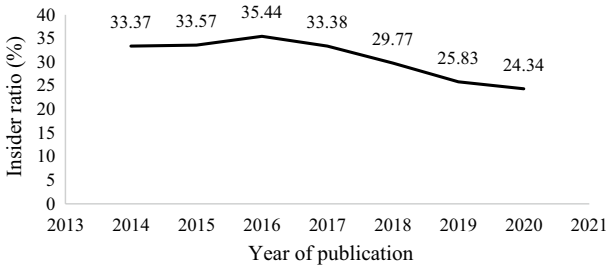

Fig. 2 Insider ratios through time

Table 4 displays time trends for insidership and speed of acceptance. Distribution of authors and insider ratios across years are presented in Panel A. The number of papers increase steadily from 1552 in 2014 to 3348 in 2020. While the number of insider papers rises from 518 to 815 in the same period, the proportional change in insider ratio is negative as total number of papers doubles. As a result, insider ratios show a declining trend over time. The insider ratio hovers above 33% until 2018, when it drops to 29.77%. It maintains the declining trend in 2019 and finishes with a low of 24.34% in 2020. The trend can be more visibly observed in Fig. 2. Panel B and C show the average and median TIME for authors. Insiders have significant speed advantage over outsiders in all years, except 2014

where the number of observations is small due to journals withholding the submission and acceptance dates. The information disclosure ratio is a mere 7.28%, which increases to 99.5% in 2020. The largest TIME differences are observed in 2016 and 2017, where insiders have close to 50 days advantage over outsiders. These two years follow the introduction of the academic incentive scheme in 2015 (coming into effect in 2016) and new academic promotion regulation at the end of 2016. Moreover, insider ratio peaks at 35.44% and number of publications leap by 36.7% in 2016. It is highly unlikely that these movements are coincidental. On the contrary, it is more likely that authors and journals attempt to adjust to new realities on the ground by taking advantage of their insidership and increasing their output. It is encouraging that insider ratio shows a significant decline recently, which is likely to be related to the new indexing requirement that authors should be geographically distributed, effective in 2019. This demonstrates that insider bias in editorial review can be mitigated through subjecting journals to effective regulations and monitoring.

Table 5 investigates insidership by the academic title of author. Three type of analysis is conducted in Panel A, B, and C. In Panel A, other author titles can coexist, and multiple counts are allowed. The total number of observations in Panel A therefore exceeds the sample size. Panel B does not allow multiple counts and only considers papers written by authors bearing the same title. This enables observation of the particular behavior pertaining to the specific academic title. Panel C further narrows down the sample to single-authored papers. The results in this panel not only belong to the particular academic title, but also to the concerned individual as there is only one author. Panel C presents the purest and independent behavior of academics as their publication behavior would not be affected by the decisions of co-authors.

The findings show that insider publications are widespread and provide TIME advantage across all titles; however, higher-ranked academics are greater beneficiaries. PROFESSORs have the largest, and ASTPROFs have the lowest insider ratio of academic staff by all three measures. There is a descending order of insider ratios from PROFESSOR to ASTPROF, which is likely to reflect the distribution of power in the campus and established networks of more senior academics. ASTLECTs are placed above the ASTPROF, probably due to their ability to publish with higher ranked academics as they tend to work with multiple academics during their studies. NONACADEMIC authors have the lowest insider ratio amongst all authors, reflecting their lack of connection to the academia and journal. Even when NONACADEMICs have insider connection, it does not induce significant TIME differences, again reflecting their lack of their power at the campus. Unreported TIME differences between titles are only significant for single-authored papers in favor of PROFESSORs. The differences arise because PROFESSOR insider ratio steadily increases from multiple-authored papers in Panel A towards single-authored papers in Panel C, leading to shorter TIME statistics for them. Meanwhile, insider ratios of ASCPROF, ASTPROF and ASTLECT remain relatively constant in all panels. To illustrate the effect induced by the academic title, TIME differentials between single-authored academic and NONACADEMIC papers are reported in Panel D. The comparison shows that academic titles provide significant speed advantage over NONACADEMICs. However, outsiders are not affected by the academic title as their TIME takes longer in all scenarios.

There is a descending order of insider ratios based on seniority. 39.21% of all papers that include PROFESSORs and 46.62% of all papers single-authored by PROFESSORs have inside connection, the latter nearly doubling the 24.05% single ASTPROF insider ratio. Note that despite having considerably lower insider ratios than PROFESSOR, ASTPROF and ASTLECT publish an aggregate 1499 single-authored insider papers out of 1960 papers (76.5%). Including ASCPROF who also may benefit from insider papers in

Table 5 Average time-to-acceptance and insider ratio by academic title

	All	INSIDER	OUT-SIDER	Difference	N (All: Insider)	Insider ratio (%)	PEER (%)
Panel A: All Titles (incl. multiple titles)							
PROFESSOR	146.7	118.6	163.7	− 45.1***	3004:1178	39.21	
ASCPROF	140.9	109.7	155.9	− 46.2***	3825:1301	34.01	
ASTPROF	142.2	108.2	153.3	− 45.1***	7632:1992	26.1	
ASTLECT	146	118.1	159.4	− 41.3***	6095:2065	33.88	
Panel B: One title only (PEER)							
PROFESSOR	136.6	115.7	149.8	− 34.1***	804:334	41.54	26.76
ASCPROF	137.8	105.2	154.1	− 48.8***	1703:602	35.35	44.52
ASTPROF	137.8	100.7	148.8	− 48.1***	5098:1233	24.18	66.8
ASTLECT	142.8	112.8	156	− 43.2***	2493:815	32.69	40.9
NONACADEMIC	150	143.5	151.6	− 8.1	1489:262	17.6	
Panel C: Single authors only							
PROFESSOR	114.3	92.1	131.8	− 39.8***	311:145	46.62	100
ASCPROF	138.5	90	162.2	− 72.3***	885:316	35.71	100
ASTPROF	137.2	98.8	148.3	− 49.5***	3480:837	24.05	100
ASTLECT	140.2	110	153.8	− 43.8***	1948:662	34	100
NONACADEMIC	144.8	134.3	146.7	− 12.4	923:141	15.27	
Panel D: Differences							
PROF. vs. NONAC	− 30.5***	− 42.2**	− 14.9				
ASCPROF. vs. NONAC	− 6.3***	− 44.3***	15.5				
ASTPROF vs. NONAC	− 7.6***	− 35.5***	1.6				

Variables are defined in Table 1. *** is significant at 1% level

Table 6 Average time-to-acceptance and insider ratio by language, university generation, and thesis papers

	All	INSIDER	OUTSIDER	Difference	N (All: Insider)	Insider ratio (%)
ENGLISH	156.2	117	166.5	− 49.5***	2122:471	22.2
TURKISH	141.1	113	153	− 40***	14,394:4444	30.9
ENGLISH vs. TURKISH	15.1***	4	13.5***			
	(4.63)	(0.67)	(3.56)			
NEWGENERATION	123.8	97.5	131.4	− 33.9***	3190:714	22.4
OLDGENERATION	147.5	116.1	161.2	− 45.1***	13,385:4224	31.6
NEWGEN. vs. OLDGEN	− 23.7***	− 18.6***	− 29.8***			
	(− 8.82)	(3.89)	(− 9.38)			
THESIS	155.6	120.3	165.7	− 45.4***	1800:694	38.6
NONTHESIS	178.7	125.5	182.6	− 57.1***	14,775:4244	28.7
THESIS vs. NONTHESIS	− 23.1**	− 5.2*	− 16.9***			
	(− 2.20)	(− 1.72)	(− 2.84)			

Variables are defined in Table 1. t-values are given in parentheses. *** is significant at 1%, ** is significant at 5%, and * is significant at 10% level

their full professorship application, this ratio rises to 92.6%. These statistics demonstrate that ASCPROF, ASTPROF and ASTLECT are the main beneficiaries in terms of numbers. Overall, senior academics are more likely to exercise their insider power and benefit from it, which support the prediction in H2 that insider authorship and academic seniority is closely related.

An interesting observation in Table 5 is the tendency of senior academics to rely on others to publish. For example, only 311 (10% of) PROFESSORs write single-authored papers, while 885 (23.1% of) ASCPROFs, 3480 (45.6%) of ASTPROFs, and 1948 (32% of) ASTLECTs do so. To investigate this matter further, PEER statistics are calculated which report the percentage of the papers written only by authors bearing the same title. For example, the PEER for PROFESSOR is calculated as 804 divided by 3004, which yields 26.76%. It shows that 26.76% of the papers authored by PROFESSORs have only professor authors. The PEER statistic rises to 40.9% for ASTLECT, 44.5% for ASCPROFs and to 66.8% for ASTPROFs. In other words, 73.24% of papers published by PROFESSORs are co-authored by less senior academics, and 59.1% of papers written by ASTLECTs are co-authored by more senior academics. This contrast at the two end of academic rankings shows that senior academics rely more on less senior academics to publish.

Table 6 presents insider bias by language and type of the paper, as well as generation of the journal. The results are consistent with the predictions in H3, H4 and H5. The insider ratio for papers written in English is 22.2%, which is substantially lower than 30.9% for papers in Turkish. A difference of similar magnitude is documented between NEW and OLDGENERATION journals, the former having a 22.4% insider ratio and the latter 31.6%. Research papers originating from graduate theses have some of the largest insider ratios with 38.6%. Only PROFESSORs have larger insider ratios than THESIS, as discussed above. The first two columns show significant TIME differences between variables under

consideration, prior to the consideration of insider effect. The average TIME is 15.1 days longer for papers in ENGLISH, 23.7 days shorter for NEWGENERATION, and 7.4 days larger for THESIS papers. In other words, papers written in Turkish, submitted to new generation journals, and not originating from graduate theses tend to be accepted faster. While insiders maintain their TIME advantage over outsiders by all measures, some insiders and outsiders appear to have comparative advantage over others. For example, insiders in NEWGENERATION journals are able to publish significantly faster than those in OLDGENERATION. Similarly, outsider papers in TURKISH, NEWGENERATION journals and NONTHESIS papers have speed advantage over the rest of the outsiders.

Cross-comparisons reveal even larger differences between authors. For example, the average outsider writing in English needs to wait 53.5-day longer than the average insider writing in Turkish. This illustrates that the review process is far from being author- and language-neutral. Moreover, a closer examination of THESIS papers reveals greater tendency for senior academics to work with graduate students and publish insider papers with them. PROFESSORs make the second largest contribution to the THESIS papers with 536 (30%) publications, despite authoring only 18% of the papers in the sample. This number is equal to 1.72 times the 311 papers single-authored by them, and compares favorably against ASCPROF and ASTPROF, who co-author 460 (25.6% of) and 685 (38%) of the THESIS papers, respectively. Compared to all publications, papers originating from graduate theses constitute 17.8% of the PROFESSOR papers, 12% of the ASCPROF and 9% of the ASTPROF papers. Finally, insider ratios in THESIS papers follow a declining order of seniority: 234 (44% of) PROFESSOR, 177 (38% of) ASCPROF, and 254 (37% of) ASTPROF papers from graduate theses have insider authors, supporting previous findings regarding the academic title and insidership relationship.

Multivariate regressions for the tests of all hypotheses are presented in Table 7. Probit regressions in the first two columns are based on the Eq. (1), OLS regressions and Heckman follow Eq. (2). The first probit utilizes entire sample, while the second is based on the 11,841 observations disclosing TIME information. The second probit is also the selection equation in Heckman. Year-fixed effects are included in the probit and OLS models because preceding analysis shows a declining trend of insider ratio over years. In Heckman estimation, selection equation must include at least one variable that is not in the outcome equation. The final model is formed bearing this rule in mind. For example, preceding investigation shows that ENGLISH is related to both insidership and TIME, while SPECIAL is not related to insidership but rather to the speed of acceptance. Therefore, ENGLISH is included in both models, and SPECIAL is included only in the OLS.

The parameters support predictions in all five hypotheses and previous findings. Specifically, probit estimates show that the likelihood of being an insider increases with the PROFESSOR, ASCPROF, and THESIS, whereas it decreases with ENGLISH, NEWGENERATION, ASTPROF and NONACADEMIC. All coefficients and the overall model specification are highly significant. Replicating Eq. (1) by substituting INSIDER with INSIDERRATIO and estimating it by OLS leads to identical results and not reported. The main variables of interest, INSIDER and INSIDERRATIO in the OLS regressions are highly significant along with other variables. Tests show that one standard deviation increase in INSIDER (INSIDERRATIO) is associated with a 17.94% (18.44%) reduction in LOGTIME. This lends considerable support to the main prediction in H1 that insidership is associated with shorter time-to-acceptance. Consistent with the prior findings, SPECIAL issues and NEWGENERATION journals are associated with shorter TIME. Remarkably, ESCI variable is negatively related to insidership and positively related to LOGTIME, implying that high-standard national research has lower probability to publish

Table 7 Determinants of insider selection and time-to-acceptance

	Dependent variable: INSIDER		Dependent variable: LOGTIME		Dep. variable: LOGTIME
	Probit1	Probit2	OLS1	OLS2	Heckman
INSIDER			− 0.349***		− 0.346***
			(− 18.34)		(− 18.09)
INSIDERRATIO				− 0.384***	
				(− 18.73)	
SPECIAL			− 0.503***	− 0.502***	− 0.522***
			(− 17.51)	(− 17.48)	(− 18.10)
ENGLISH	− 0.248***	− 0.246***	0.049**	0.048**	− 0.025
	[− 7.52]	[− 6.20]	(2.02)	(2.00)	(− 0.94)
NEWGENERATION	− 0.258***	− 0.239***	− 0.128***	− 0.132***	− 0.205***
	[-9.26]	[− 7.41]	(− 6.64)	(− 6.83)	(-8.94)
PROFESSOR	0.225***	0.235***	0.053**	0.042**	0.138***
	[7.86]	[7.02]	(2.49)	(2.02)	(5.43)
ASCPROF	0.049*	0.061*			
	[1.83]	[1.85]			
ASTPROF	− 0.209***	− 0.196***			
	[-8.58]	[− 6.74]			
NONACADEMIC	− 0.451***	− 0.304***			
	[− 10.05]	[− 5.59]			
THESIS	0.244***	0.203***	0.041*	0.049*	0.109***
	[7.41]	[5.35]	(1.65)	(1.96)	(4.09)
ESCI	− 0.927***	− 0.860***	0.506***	0.503***	0.220***
	[− 12.70]	[-8.87]	(11.97)	(11.94)	(3.76)
Inverse Mills					0.401***
					(6.44)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Constant	− 0.559***	− 0.582***	4.83***	4.83***	4.27***
	[− 17.83]	[− 17.05]	(277.89)	(278.53)	(56.09)
Adj./Pseudo R^2 (%)	4.43	3.79	8.58	8.76	7.96
F/χ^2	803.24	503.55	87.96	89.57	128.07
N	16,575	11,841	11,841	11,841	11,841

Regressions are reported with heteroskedasticity consistent standard errors. LOGTIME is defined as natural logarithm of 1 plus time-to-acceptance in days. Other variables are defined in Table 1. t-values are in parentheses, z-values are in brackets. All VIF values are smaller than 1.5, suggesting no collinearity

insider papers and longer time-to-acceptance. This supports the stance of authors that editorial favoritism towards insiders is not associated with higher-quality research but carries rent-seeking motives at the expense of research quality. Finally, the significant Inverse Mills ratio indicates that insider selection bias identified in the dataset is statistically valid.

Based on the significant determinants of TIME, an attempt is made to identify the authors that suffer the longest peer review. Table 7 suggests that regular issues, old generation journals, and outsiders are associated with longer TIME. More specific filters such as academic

title and thesis are not applied to avoid narrowing down the sample. Papers bearing all of these criteria constitute half (8277 papers, 50%) of the sample. Consistent with the expectation, they have 168.5-day average and 135-day median TIME, which are some of the longest statistics so far. An additional layer of English filter increases these statistics to 175.6 and 148 days respectively. The most disadvantaged authors that meet all four TIME-extending criteria comprise 1287 (7.8% of) the overall sample. Interestingly, insidership is not related to providing the most TIME advantage. Editors of special issues accept papers with such speed that would only be envy of insiders. The most privileged 1614 (9.7% of) papers in special issues publish nearly twice as fast as the least privileged 1287 (7.8% of) authors, as 88.23-day average TIME of the former compares favorably against 175.6-day average TIME of the latter. A secondary conclusion should point out that journals' article selection process is not only negatively biased against outsiders, but also against papers in English and against the issue to which they are submitted. The faster publication for Turkish papers; however, may not indicate editorial favoritism. As most Turkish academics prefer to publish in the local language and many find it difficult to achieve a professional level of English proficiency, it may simply take longer to find suitable reviewers for papers written in English. Remarkably, none of these statistics come close to ESCI journals, which take 238.2 days to accept the average submission. We interpret this as an indicator of quality as high-quality publications often take longer time and require multiple revisions.

Policy implications

The current academic incentive and promotion regulations reward national publications and penalize publications indexed by Scopus and Web of Science as far as reward-to-effort ratio is concerned. Publishing in national journals provides a shortcut to academic promotion as they are almost always nationally refereed, which means that authors submitting to these journals are isolated from the fierce competition and high rejection rates that often characterize well-known international journals. Academics attempt to accelerate the review process by activating insider networks and receive priority treatment in the editorial review. To discourage this practice, regulations must emphasize quality over quantity, shortcuts to academic promotion should be removed, and new regulations should stipulate publishing in well-known journals. Publishing in affiliated journals should not be rewarded with points towards academic incentive and promotion, as they provide significant time advantage to insiders. Moreover, TR-DIZIN needs to have more robust inclusion criteria, should employ a stringent editorial quality assessment, and monitor a greater number of peer reviews per issue. Currently, TR-DIZIN is far from utilizing its full potential and unable to mount a real challenge to the existing centers of knowledge described in Collyer (2018), due to its long-neglected state. It indexes 672 Social Science journals compared to over 3400 journals indexed in SSCI globally. If TR-DIZIN is to imply national prestige and high-standard research, the number of indexed journals must be considerably reduced. TR-DIZIN evaluates peer review process by randomly selecting two or three papers each year. Instead, peer reviews in a fixed percentage of published papers should be monitored annually. Illustrating the lack of accountability and monitoring over national journals, none of the 68 journals in the sample discloses vital statistics such as acceptance rate, time-to-first decision, and time-to-acceptance. These statistics are important and often used to determine predatory behavior, as quick publication and rarity of rejection are hallmarks of predatory journals (Atiso et al., 2019; Bohannon, 2013). This

study provides first insights and sheds light on the shadowy practices of national journals by providing several of these statistics. The authors urge the regulator to stipulate disclosure of journal information and encourage journal editors to enhance transparency of peer review process to provide an unbiased and author-neutral review.

Conclusion, limitations, and suggestions for future research

This research extends the prior literature on insider bias and provides evidence in a sample of Turkish national journals on the favorable editorial treatment of authors from the close networks of editors at their affiliated university. The authors question the journal choice of authors and argue that they are likely to get accepted faster to the journal published by their university. Although editors are known to have certain biases, the magnitude of insider bias in Turkish national journals well exceeds expectations as 4938 (29.79%) of the published papers contain insider academics. Insiders are rewarded for publishing at their institutional journal and reap substantial career benefits as they maintain a 41.5-day average time advantage per paper over outsiders. An interesting observation is the scarcity of English papers in national journals. English publications constitute only 12.8% of the papers and they are penalized by longer peer review process, highlighting the fact that national scientific production does not have global outreach. The top-notch national research published in ESCI journals have considerably lower insider ratios and longer publication delays, suggesting that more prestigious journals are less likely to engage in editorial favoritism. The findings underline the belated requirement for policy changes in academic regulations, TR-DIZIN indexing criteria, and non-transparent editorial practices. The results should provide a tangible basis for the fruitful discussion of the current academic practices in Turkey and beyond.

This study relies on accepted papers to test the predictions about insiders. A better approach would be to consider the entirety of submissions by incorporating both accepted and rejected papers; however, the rejection decisions are unobservable. Future studies could greatly extend this research by looking into rejected manuscripts and the presence of an editorial bias through selective rejection, i.e., whether insiders are less likely to get rejected. The question is important because journal editors face a moral hazard problem facing their colleagues on one hand and their fiduciary duties on the other. Second, the study investigates insider authorship through national journal papers. Future studies could instead take the academics themselves as study subjects and utilize academic staff resumes to examine how impactful insider authorship is to their career. Comparisons such as SSCI vs. insider publications and whether insidership results in faster academic promotion could provide useful insights into the state of Turkish academia and be complementary to the findings of this research. Third, future research may incorporate other areas of social sciences such as linguistics, theology, history, and archaeology. Although this study inevitably contains varying amounts of papers from these areas, it is designed to focus on Business and Economics to maintain sample homogeneity. Fourth, a broader insider definition could be adopted to reflect past employments. Finally, this study considers state universities only. Future research could also include journals owned by privately funded universities to provide a wider perspective.

Appendix

Demographics of Turkish National Journals

Journal Title	Years in TR-DIZIN	All Papers	Disclosed Papers	Insider Papers	Disclosure ratio (%)	Insider ratio (%)	Mean TIME	Mean Insider TIME	Mean Outsider TIME	Median TIME	Median Insider TIME	Median Outsider TIME	Mean Diff	Median Diff
Abant İzzet Baysal SBED	2015–2020	301	299	68	99.33	22.59	146.51	117.34	154.93	112	95	120	− 37.59	− 25
Adıyaman Üni. SBED (*)	2014–2020	324	285	67	87.96	20.68	160.64	126.29	169.61	148	101	153.5	− 43.32	− 52.5
Afyon Kocatepe Üni. SBD	2015–2020	303	290	87	95.71	28.71	248.20	212.57	262.25	210	180.5	214	− 49.68	− 33.5
Ahi Evran Üni. SBED (*)	2018–2020	108	108	31	100	28.7	152.33	146.42	154.71	133.5	109	140	− 8.29	− 31
Akademik Araş. ve Çalış. Der. (*)	2017–2020	140	140	2	100	1.42	127.76	34.50	129.12	115	34.5	115	− 94.62	− 80.5
Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi	2014–2020	173	73	49	42.19	28.32	175.88	170.39	178.40	139	142	135.5	− 8.01	6.5
Akdeniz İİBF Dergisi	2014–2020	134	98	46	73.13	34.33	116.64	103.54	121.89	101.5	86	109	− 18.35	− 23
Alanya Akademik Bakis (*)	2019–2020	76	76	8	100	10.52	125.49	79.00	130.96	94.5	46.5	102	− 51.96	− 55.5
Anadolu Üniversitesi SBD	2014–2020	432	231	112	53.47	25.92	256.57	217.74	266.49	228	174	245	− 48.74	− 71
Anemon Muş Alp. Üni. SBD (*)	2016–2020	677	676	141	99.85	20.82	104.56	84.22	109.93	90.5	70	96	− 25.71	− 26

Demographics of Turkish National Journals

Journal Title	Years in TR-DIZIN	All Papers	Disclosed Papers	Insider Papers	Disclosure ratio (%)	Insider ratio (%)	Mean TIME	Mean Insider TIME	Mean Outsider TIME	Median TIME	Median Insider TIME	Median Outsider TIME	Mean Diff	Median Diff
Ankara Avrupa Çalış. Dergisi	2014–2020	105	85	25	80.95	23.81	156.18	83.16	177.20	123	55	137.5	− 94.04	− 82.5
Ankara HBV Üni. IIBF Dergisi (*)	2018–2020	298	212	127	41.14	42.62	98.93	71.06	115.49	77.5	48	96	− 44.43	− 48
Ankara Üni. SBF Dergisi	2014–2020	302	283	84	93.71	27.81	169.06	140.07	178.40	135	98	150	− 38.33	− 52
Atatürk Üni. IIBF Dergisi	2014–2020	370	290	118	78.38	31.89	151.85	127.89	163.71	118.5	100	127.5	− 35.82	− 27.5
Atatürk Üni. SBED	2014–2020	750	595	380	79.33	50.67	127.55	124.00	130.92	96	95	98	− 6.92	− 3
Balıkesir Üni. SBED	2014–2020	328	286	117	87.2	35.67	133.85	101.61	150.92	110	70	128	− 49.31	− 58
Bingöl Üni. IIBF Dergisi (*)	2019–2020	31	31	9	100	29.03	124.48	109.11	130.77	125	95	132.5	− 21.66	− 37.5
Çukurova Üni. SBED	2014–2020	446	236	234	52.91	52.46	147.05	113.32	180.78	109.5	85	142	− 67.46	− 57
Cumhuriyet Üni. İkt. ve İd. Bil. D	2014–2020	167	104	88	62.27	52.69	67.10	55.18	80.47	48.5	34	51	− 25.29	− 17
Dokuz Eylül Üni. Deniz. Fak. Der	2014–2020	107	101	69	94.39	64.49	106.03	95.18	126.49	81	76	83	− 31.30	− 7
Dokuz Eylül Üni. İşletme Fak. D	2014–2020	102	91	49	89.21	48.04	171.01	152.68	190.59	122	115	124	− 37.91	− 9

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Dokuz Eylül Üni. SBED	2014–2020	272	272	52	100	19.12	231.60	176.88	244.53	180	113	196	− 67.64	− 83
Dumlupınar Üni. SBD	2014–2020	616	207	203	33.6	32.95	168.90	114.66	190.02	146	99.5	155	− 75.36	− 55.5
Ege Akademik Bakış (**)	2014–2020	312	127	28	40.71	8.97	251.91	217.55	255.16	230	187	237.5	− 37.62	− 50.5
Ekonomik ve Sosyal Aras. Der	2014–2020	171	74	24	43.27	14.03	137.58	95.71	147.35	94.5	64.5	98.5	− 51.64	− 34
Erciyes Üni. IIBF Der	2014–2020	213	93	60	43.66	28.16	175.30	158.08	178.10	204	149	206	− 20.02	− 57
Eskişehir Osman. Üni. IIBF D. (**)	2014–2020	266	182	28	68.42	10.52	233.05	196.50	237.56	221.5	194	221.5	− 41.06	− 27.5
Eskişehir Osman. Üni. SBD	2014–2020	173	134	54	77.46	31.21	141.10	139.21	141.88	139	146	135	− 2.68	11
Finansal Araş. ve Çalış. Dergisi	2014–2020	144	50	40	34.72	27.78	175.54	116.40	200.89	147	112	166	− 84.49	− 54
Gazi Akademik Bakış (*)	2014–2020	172	131	39	76.16	22.67	175.69	129.41	185.04	161	99.5	185	− 55.63	− 85.5
Gaziantep Üni. SBD	2014–2020	611	412	158	67.43	25.86	130.88	116.28	134.85	113.5	100	116	− 18.56	− 16
Hacettepe Sağlık İdaresi Dergisi	2015–2020	186	186	53	100	28.49	131.89	111.42	140.05	111.5	88	122	− 28.64	− 34

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Hacettepe Üni. IIBF Dergisi	2014–2020	186	112	44	60.21	23.66	298.46	295.59	298.98	284.5	255	288	− 3.39	− 33
Hitit Üni. SBED (*)	2014–2020	437	423	117	96.8	26.77	110.54	87.04	118.80	93	71	102	− 31.76	− 31
Istanbul Business Research (**)	2018–2020	41	41	2	100	4.88	219.17	213.00	219.49	212	213	212	− 6.49	1
Istanbul Iktisat Dergisi	2014–2017	33	4	16	12.12	48.48	220.50	17.00	288.33	172.5	17	274	− 271.3	− 257
İzmir Iktisat Dergisi	2019–2020	211	209	48	99.05	22.75	165.85	132.40	175.55	136	109	143.5	− 43.15	− 34.5
Kafkas Uni. IIBF Dergisi	2017–2020	171	170	34	99.41	19.88	163.90	113.42	176.06	156.5	103	161	− 62.63	− 58
KSÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi	2014–2020	260	213	147	81.92	56.54	121.94	113.50	131.85	101	91	128	− 18.34	− 37
KTÜ SBE SBD	2016–2020	93	92	30	98.92	32.26	172.59	115.45	198.89	147	99	181	− 83.44	− 82
Karen Kar. Ar. Ens. Dergisi	2018–2020	54	54	15	100	27.78	68.94	35.13	81.95	55	22	77	− 46.82	− 55
Kocaeli Üni. SBD	2014–2018	100	32	53	32	53	113.00	95.00	128.88	90	90	95	− 33.88	− 5
Marmara Üni. İkt. ve İd. Bil. Der	2014–2020	208	33	84	15.86	40.38	122.91	113.08	128.52	96	86	96	− 15.44	− 10
Marmara Üni. Siyasal Bil. Dergisi	2016–2018	141	78	46	55.32	32.62	126.87	97.32	143.42	102	90	128.5	− 46.10	− 38.5

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Mustafa Kemal Üni. SBED (*)	2014–2016	262	16	54	6.11	20.61	210.44	204.67	211.77	197.5	196	199	− 7.10	− 3
Nevşehir HBV Üni. SBED (*)	2018–2020	109	109	43	100	39.45	134.78	111.47	149.97	127	105	135.5	− 38.50	− 30.5
Ömer Halisdemir Üni. IIBF Dergisi	2019–2020	101	101	22	100	21.78	147.41	126.14	153.33	120	106	136	− 27.19	− 30
Öneri	2014–2020	206	89	81	43.2	39.32	113.15	102.07	118.78	88	76	91	− 16.71	− 15
Optimum Ek.ve Yön. Bil. Der. (*)	2017–2020	81	80	12	98.76	14.81	77.29	78.91	77.03	70	75	70	1.88	5
Pamukkale Üni. SBED	2014–2020	414	290	90	70.04	21.74	107.32	71.66	116.74	77.5	61	100	− 45.08	− 39
Selçuk Üni. SBED	2014–2020	391	307	191	78.52	48.85	94.87	94.45	95.26	59	44.5	67	− 0.81	− 22.5
Selçuk Üni. Sos. Bil. MYO Der	2017–2020	174	172	52	98.85	29.88	101.54	77.96	111.20	80	57.5	93	− 33.24	− 35.5
Siyasal: Journal of Political Science	2015–2020	79	65	13	82.28	16.45	182.85	128.31	196.48	163	72	199	− 68.17	− 127
Sosyal Bilimler Araş. Dergisi	2014–2020	302	258	129	85.43	42.71	89.53	92.16	87.87	71	75	67	4.29	8
Sosyal Siyaset Konf. Dergisi	2017–2020	79	79	17	100	21.52	85.09	74.47	88.00	70	58	75	− 13.53	− 17

Demographics of Turkish National Journals

Journal Title	Years in TR-DIZIN	All Papers	Disclosed Papers	Insider Papers	Disclosure ratio (%)	Insider ratio (%)	Mean TIME	Mean Insider TIME	Mean Outsider TIME	Median TIME	Median Insider TIME	Median Outsider TIME	Mean Diff	Median Diff
SDÜ FEF Sos. Bil. Dergisi	2014–2020	282	144	106	51.06	37.59	101.24	99.14	102.32	83.5	74	92	− 3.17	− 18
SDÜ Vizyoner Dergisi	2017–2020	184	184	87	100	47.28	85.86	73.05	97.35	75.5	59	91	− 24.30	− 32
Trakya Üni. Balkan Arş. Ens. Der	2014–2020	88	52	26	59.09	29.55	109.67	99.70	112.05	68	54.5	68	− 12.35	− 13.5
Trakya Üniversitesi SBD	2014–2020	333	251	117	75.37	35.13	192.67	161.59	210.66	170	136.5	186	− 49.07	− 49.5
Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalış. Dergisi	2018–2020	41	41	5	100	12.2	102.12	73.20	106.14	84	68	86	− 32.94	− 18
Uludağ Üni. FEF SBD	2014–2020	206	150	108	72.81	52.42	82.60	82.27	82.86	90	90	90	− 0.58	− 0
Uluslararası Ek. ve Yeni. Dergisi	2018–2020	51	51	11	100	21.57	79.22	71.73	81.28	51	51	52.5	− 9.55	− 1.5
Uluslararası İkt. ve İdari İnc. Der	2014–2020	538	465	78	86.43	14.5	93.13	91.01	93.49	73	69	74	− 2.47	− 5
Uluslararası Yön. İkt. ve İşl. Der	2014–2020	538	271	56	50.37	10.41	193.09	98.35	198.60	180	58	185.5	− 100.3	− 127.5
Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi	2014–2020	257	57	58	22.18	22.57	152.86	163.65	163.65	116	118.5	118.5	0	0

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Yönetim ve Ekonomi Araş. Der. (*)	2014–2020	475	100	64	21.05	13.47	164.25	151.83	165.94	157	138	164.5	− 14.11	− 26.5
Yönetim ve Ekonomi: CBÜ IIBF D	2014–2020	310	259	75	83.55	24.19	239.70	195.21	255.54	220	164	246	− 60.34	− 82
YYÜ SBED	2018–2020	329	329	157	100	47.72	56.26	50.14	61.84	40	36	43	− 11.70	− 7
Total		16,575	11,839	4938	71.42	29.79	142	113.15	154.66	112	84	120	− 41.5	− 36

Table presents statistics for 68 Business and Economics journals published by Turkish state universities and indexed by TR-DIZIN. The sample represents all Business and Economics journals which are indexed for at least two consecutive years between 2014 and 2020 in the TR-DIZIN index. TIME shows the calendar time in days from submission to acceptance as declared by the journals. Negative TIME differences indicate shorter acceptance time for insiders. Disclosure ratio shows the percentage declaration of this information in journals. Overall, 11,839 (71.42%) of the papers have their TIME disclosed. Differences in TIME are measured in daily terms. SBD: Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, SBED: Sosyal Bilimler Enstitusu Dergisi (Social Science Institute Journal), IIBF: Iktisadi ve Idari Bilimler Fakultesi (Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science—FEAS), FEF: Fen Edebiyat Fakultesi (Faculty of Science and Literature). NEWGENERATION university journals are marked by (*). ESCI journals are marked by (**)

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Code availability Not applicable. The analysis is performed in Stata software.

Declarations

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