



## Comments of “A Survey of Iranian Retracted Publications Indexed in PubMed”

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### Dear Editor in Chief

We read with interest Mansourzadeh et al. study, which aimed to investigate Iranian retracted publications indexed in PubMed database (1). They did a retrospective analysis on all Iranian retracted publications in PubMed up to Dec 2017, found 164 Iranian retracted publications with highest number associated with “Islamic Azad University” followed by “Tehran University of Medical Sciences”. They concluded that the number of retracted publications has increased during these years. Although the result of this study was expected for Iranian academic publications, its design and conclusion behind it needs some considerations.

First, the study just focused on PubMed database. In absence of other sources of scientific papers, the PubMed only, could not stand for a perfect spectrum of the Iranian’s data retraction. There are lots of medical Journals which indexed in other database including ISI, EMBASE, Scopus, Chemical Abstracts, etc. Ignoring these sources could be made a potential bias in calculating Iranian’s data retraction. Second, in analysis of retraction rate, we needs an adjusted analysis not only for reporting the highest number of retracted papers associated to the universities, but also for the whole country compared to the others in the region. Although Islamic Azad Univer-

sity and Tehran University of Medical Sciences were the first and second university with most number of retractions, the data should be adjusted for the total number of published papers in same database. This adjusted analysis could be done for the total number of retracted publication in Iran according to total published papers, missed in that research.

We did an adjusted analysis on retraction growth (which calculating the growth of retraction as the rate of absolute number of retracted papers for years 2013-2017 divided to the similar number for years 2008-2012), retraction growth per 10,000 publications, publication growth and adjusted publication growth (world) and retraction growth adjusted for publication growth (2). For Iran, retraction growth number of retracted papers (2013-2017 compared to 2008-2012) was 1.27 and retraction growth per 10,000 publications was 0.079 respectively; also retraction growth adjusted for publication growth and retraction growth adjusted for world's retraction growth were 0.82 and 3.14. According to the results (Fig.1), the retraction growth of Iran was higher than some western and development countries, but less than some developing countries including Turkey, Egypt, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, etc.(2).



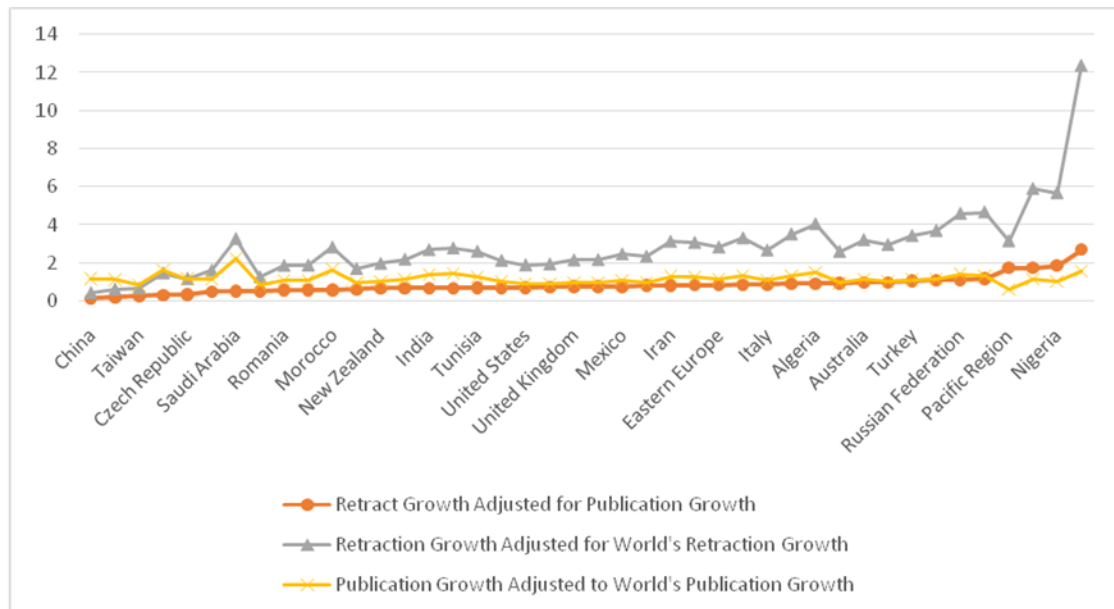


Fig. 1: Adjusted Retraction Growth and Publication Growth (2013-2017 compared to 2008-2012)

The increasing number of retracted publications for Iranian scientists is a fact for recent years; but, with ignoring that the total number of publication is also increased, and the comparison of pattern of this retraction growth with other developing countries where experiencing same growth in publication and retraction, we could not reach to an upright picture of retraction publication for Iranians. Besides, Iran is under political and economic sanctions. "Iran's publication rates have risen during recent periods of increased sanctions; however, its quantitative and qualitative metrics are discordant"(3) and this could also influence the number of retracted un-qualified papers.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### References

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