

JOURNAL OF PAKISTAN PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY: REFLECTIONS OF PUBLICATION JOURNEY FROM 2021 TO 2024

MUHAMMAD IQBAL AFRIDI¹, AFZAL JAVED², AMNA ASAD³.

¹Distinguished National Professor (HEC), Jinnah Sindh Medical University, Karachi, Pakistan.
Adjunct Professor, Baylor College of Medicine, Texas, USA.

²Honourary Professor, Institute of Applied Health Research, University of Birmingham, UK.
Honourary Clinical Associate Professor, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK.
Chairman, Pakistan Psychiatric Research Centre, Fountain House, Lahore, Pakistan.

³MS Scholar, University of Karachi, Pakistan.



CORRESPONDENCE: DR MUHAMMAD IQBAL AFRIDI

Email: driqbalafriidi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society (JPPS) has witnessed remarkable growth from 2021 to 2024, solidifying its role as a leading publication in psychiatric and mental health research in Pakistan. Under the current editorial leadership, JPPS has expanded its reach, improved indexing, enhanced its editorial policies, and eliminated financial barriers to publication. Key achievements include recognition by major academic and medical bodies, strategic collaborations, and active participation in global psychiatric forums. Despite these strides, challenges such as maintaining rigorous peer review, securing sustainable funding, and fostering diversity persist. Looking ahead, JPPS aims to enhance its digital presence, focus on emerging psychiatric domains, and strengthen engagement with the psychiatric community. While this editorial reflects on the transformative journey of JPPS, it also paves the way for future innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity in psychiatric publishing, outlining the roadmap for JPPS's continued evolution.

KEYWORDS

Editorial Policies; Leadership; Mental Health; Pakistan; Peer Review; Publication; Research.

INTRODUCTION

Over the period of four years (2021 to 2024), the Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society (JPPS) has undergone momentous growth and transformation. This editorial provides an overview of JPPS' accomplishments, challenges, and potential future directions.

JPPS GROWTH AND IMPACT

Since the "Handing Over the Baton" to the present Editor-in-Chief and his Editorial Team in 2021, ¹ the Journal has seen a steady increase in submissions, readership, and impact. A diverse range of articles across various fields of psychiatry and allied mental health disciplines have been published, which contributed not only to the advancement of knowledge in mental health but also its dissemination.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. **Expansion and Modification of Editorial Board:** The team successfully expanded the editorial board to include experts from around the globe, ensuring diverse perspectives, resulting in a rigorous peer review process, as mandated by the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), which requires at least 25% foreign board members.² The changes to the Editorial and Advisory Board were made to facilitate contributions by active clinicians and key researchers with regard to the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) policy (no publication by editorial board members) and the PMDC.^{2,3}

2. **Journal Policies:** A comprehensive document with information about the journal, its aims, scope, ownership, funding, author and peer-review instructions, along with editorial policies, has been developed as per policies and recommendations of HEC, PMDC and international criteria. This document is available on the JPPS official website, www.jpps.pk.⁴
3. **Fees:** Under the current editorship, JPPS has removed all manner of charges (article processing, submission, etc.) to facilitate mental health research and publication without financial bias. There is also no subscription fee.⁵
4. **Peer-Review Facilitation:** Guidelines for peer review, along with instructions and a structured form, have been incorporated for the reviewers' comments on the journal's website and the Open Journal System.⁶
5. **Journal's Appearance and Content:** The current Editorial Team redesigned the journal's presentation by modifying the overall layout. The transformation of the front cover comprised an illustration frame with a more centralised global vision theme that encloses artwork by multidisciplinary talented individuals for each issue. The back cover was updated and utilised for details about the journal, including its ownership, aim, scope and types of articles accepted. The Content Selection & Advisory Board (CSAB) of Scopus appreciated the presentation of JPPS in its evaluation for Scopus indexation. The layout of the manuscripts was not only visually enhanced but DOIs

(Digital Object Identifiers) were added to articles from 2021 onwards, and Copyright & Licensing statements were incorporated into all published material beginning in October 2023.

The categories of articles welcomed were also broadened to include two new sections, namely: 'Trainees' Perspectives' for postgraduate psychiatry residents and 'Spotlight' to feature mental health services, policy, training and research.

6. **Recognition and Indexation:** JPPS is recognised by HEC (3rd application submitted), PMDC (3rd application), and the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP). The journal has updated indexation in WHO Index Medicus (IMEMR), Pakmedinet, Google Scholar, besides earlier cataloguing in Weill Cornell Medicine, National Library of Medicine, and Johns Hopkins University of Medicine, indexing with old website and submission information have been added to the updated webpage.⁵ Most recently the journal attained membership of Crossref, which provides DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) for each article.⁷

The recent policy of CPSP (notification 18th December 2024) directs the FCPS trainees to publish two research articles in HEC-recognised journals in lieu of a dissertation as a former requirement for the fellowship Part-II examination,⁸ and during this tenure JPPS encourages manuscript submission from postgraduate trainees, that too without any processing or publication charges. It is worth noting that the JPPS Editorial Team anticipated this change and initiated the organisation of workshops and sessions dedicated to the importance of research and publication at various national and international conferences held in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Sukkur, Islamabad⁹ and London (UK).¹⁰

7. **Collaboration Initiatives:** The Editorial Team fostered a collaboration with the renowned organisation, World Psychiatric Association (WPA), by being the official publication partner for the WPA Thematic Congress 2023 in Karachi, thus facilitating knowledge exchange and dissemination. The JPPS Team was a major contributor to the Scientific Committee for this event where the Editor-in-Chief was entrusted with the Chair to vet presentations received.¹¹ Furthermore, similar offers for partnership were made for other Pakistan Psychiatric Society (PPS) conferences.
8. **Increased Visibility:** The journal's stature has been enhanced through updated indexation, active participation and networking at the time of the Pakistan Psychiatric Society's conferences, in the form of workshops, sessions and stalls, and the World Psychiatric Association Thematic Congress 2023 in Karachi by the team's participation in workshops, sessions, complimentary journal distribution with JPPS bookmarks & designing of the abstract book, social media engagement (Facebook, X-formerly Twitter, and Instagram) and strategic marketing efforts (i.e., pharmaceutical collaborations).
9. **Updated Website and Archives:** Currently the JPPS is paying to maintain two websites, i.e., OJS (open journal

system⁴ www.jpps.pk and the old site for JPPS archives before Non-OJS www.jpps.com.pk). Although the Editorial Team updated both sites, but to overcome the financial constraints and the confusion caused during the PMDC evaluation of JPPS, the Editorial Team hired the services of IT and other experts to upload the pre-OJS application archives to the current OJS integrated website.

CHALLENGES

1. **Maintaining Consistent Quality:** Ensuring the quality of published articles that is consistent in an issue with increasing numbers of submissions has been and will be a constant challenge, even though the Editorial Team has instituted a robust peer review process and editorial guidelines to address this issue.
2. **The Peer Review Process:** Engaging dedicated reviewers, ensuring timely reviews and responding to reviewer comments are a few of the major obstacles in maintaining the effectiveness and the standard of quality in the peer review process. There is a need to properly recognise and incentivise the peer reviewers of the journal.
3. **Catering to Diversity and Managing Inclusion:** Despite strides in diversifying the editorial board and content, there is a need for further efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in psychiatric, behavioural sciences and mental health research and publication in Pakistan, perhaps by engaging the Psychology Departments of the many universities that exist in the country. There is also a need for keen 'glocal' (global + local) reviewers. It has been and will remain a challenge to fulfil the HEC and PMDC Criteria for article acceptance, to exclude manuscripts from the members of the editorial team and publishing authority. This restriction has resulted in the loss of valuable potential contributors from the meagre number of academic psychiatrists in Pakistan.
4. **Funding and Resources:** JPPS currently lacks dedicated funding from its owner and publisher, the PPS. The society has also yet to amend its constitution to declare JPPS as a sub-entity of the Pakistan Psychiatric Society so that it may independently and transparently conduct its financial transactions. The absence of proper funding has also resulted in JPPS solely depending on printed advertisements for revenue resources and other expenditures, such as dedicated office space, full-time staff, web hosting & maintenance, printing, and paid membership for Crossref and DOIs.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- **Innovation in Publishing:** Embracing technological advancements and exploring new publishing models to enhance accessibility, interactivity, and engagement with the readers, authors, and reviewers will become essential in the near future.
- **Focus on Emerging Areas:** Prioritising and encouraging submissions in emerging areas in psychiatry, such as digital mental health, neurodiversity, and global mental health disparities, can become a valuable and interesting source of garnering material for publication.

- **Community Engagement:** Strengthening JPPS's engagement with the global psychiatric and mental health community through webinars, workshops, and collaborative initiatives to foster knowledge sharing and professional development is an important method of projecting the Journal as well as the Pakistan Psychiatric Society.
- **Inclusion of Medical Students and Trainee Psychiatrists:** Ensuring dedicated sections for medics and future psychiatrists by encouraging early-career contributions as case reports, reflections and commentary on issues unique to their setting, mental health awareness advocacy and policy recommendations for training programmes is an important way of promoting the specialty, journal and PPS.
- **Pakistan Psychiatric Society (PPS) Events:** Creating a recurring section and dedicated pages in each issue to highlight PPS conferences, other international psychiatric events, teaching and training workshops, symposia and webinars. Publishing abstracts and key highlights from major PPS events, fostering greater engagement of members.
- **Impact & Indexation:** In order to have an impact factor, the Editorial Team has fulfilled the requirements to apply for Scopus/Web of Sciences. In this regard, the new editorial team would be advised to make a note of the following essential points: Editor and Editorial Board Member affiliations, geographic diversity (diversity of the editorial team in terms of local-cum-international representation), and publication records must be consistent with the stated scope and published content of the journal. The size and composition of the Editorial Board must be consistent with the volume and variety of articles published by the journal. All the members should have their ORCID registrations and institutional emails. Due consideration should also be given to employing full-time professional editors and staff.¹²

CONCLUSION

In the past four years, the Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society has made significant strides in Psychiatry and the Behavioural Sciences in Pakistan, along with the promotion of the national and society's mental health agenda, globally. Yet, upon looking towards the future, the journal is committed to furthering its mission of disseminating contemporary research, fostering collaboration, and promoting mental health equity in the country and worldwide. This report is a review and testament to the dedication and contributions of the Editorial Team, Reviewers, Authors, and Readers that have helped in shaping the success of JPPS as a trailblazer in the field of mental health and as a flag bearer of the Pakistan Psychiatric Society.

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