

Original Article**Iranian Distance Education (IDEJ): Context analysis****Amir Karimi*¹, Robab Rahmati², Mahmoud Meidani³**

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Received: 2023/06/22**Accepted:** 2024/04/22**Abstract**

The Iranian Distance Education Journal (IDEJ) is one of the most critical journals in electronic education that publishes articles in the field of distance education. This research aims to review and analyze the content and citations of IDEJ articles. The research method, content analysis, and citation were done using Excel and SPSS software. The research findings showed that 81 articles were published in 10 issues of this quarterly magazine, from number 1 of volume A to number 2 of volume 4. Findings show that 83 percent were written in groups, the rest were written individually, 54% were university faculty members, and Payam Noor University had the most significant number of authors. Quantitative methods were used more with 66%, the keyword "e-learning" with 14 repetitions had the most extensive range of articles, and three professors from Payam Noor University had the most significant articles. Also, some authors were from Brazil, Nigeria, and Alaska, and women are as active as men. Suggestions were also made to correct the deficiencies and develop the magazine.

Keywords

E-learning, Iranian Distance Education, Content Analysis.

Introduction

Scientific journals, whose number is growing daily, are regarded as one of the essential characteristics of a social system entering a developmental stage and play a unique role in constructing the intricate global network of information exchange [1]– [3]. Scientific journals are one of the most significant sources for these products and accomplishments, which have increased over the past ten years due to research at all levels of science and specialization. Because of their two scientific and social roles, namely producing scientific knowledge and fostering scientific communication, scientific journals must constantly assess their research and output using scientific techniques and instruments. So, we need to use content analysis to analyze them.

The presence of relationships, the strength of links between variables, and the direction of relationships may all be examined using content analysis [4], [5]. Statistical tests may be used to determine the frequency of various indicators and compare them. Using content analysis, researchers can measure and examine the existence, meanings, and connections of such terms, themes, or particular concepts. Then, they conclude the texts' themes, the author(s), the intended audience, and even the society and era in which they were written.

Researchers must first specify the research topic and choose a sample or samples to examine before starting a conceptual content analysis [6]– [8]. The text should then be organized into groups of manageable substances. Essentially, this is a process of selected reduction. The researcher might concentrate on and code particular terms or patterns that describe the study issue by categorizing the text [9], [10]. The content analysis of periodicals and articles on a given topic is particularly alluring among international publications. Also,

the journals on this subject must be evaluated and examined owing to the large-scale publishing of numerous works in virtual and electronic education. In the meantime, Iranian Distance Education magazine is one of the prestigious magazines with a grade of "B" from the Ministry of Science of Iran, published in cooperation with Payam Noor University and the Iranian Electronic Learning Association. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the articles published in IDEJ.

Theoretical Foundations and Research Literature

The Iranian Distance Education Journal (IDEJ) is acknowledged globally as the journal of reference for scholarly work and research in Iranian remote learning. IDEJ was founded in 2017 to advance research and spread knowledge on distance learning in Iran. IDEJ (Print: 2588-4476, Online: 2676-7775) examines issues about all teaching-learning partnerships when the players are geographically dispersed and communication occurs through technology. Most articles now report on learning, e-learning, distributed learning, asynchronous learning, and blended learning because the Internet is the primary tool used in modern distance education. An international journal with double-anonymized peer review is IDEJ. Its objectives are to promote academic and research endeavors in the vast disciplines of open, adaptable, distant education and training. This magazine was among the first to be established with a sole concentration on this aspect of educational practice, and many continue to see it as a front-runner in the field for its research, breadth, and depth of coverage. The magazine is a significant source of creative and academic work for practitioners, instructors, and students worldwide. Article processing fees and any other publication charges in the journal are not charged to authors since Payame Noor University has covered all of the publishing costs for Communication Management in Sports Media [11]. In this section, some articles in this field are mentioned.

According to Alipour (2018) and his Colleagues' study, 93.4% of the articles were written correctly, 71.6% of the writers were males, and articles with three authors had the most authors overall. Assistant professors hold the top spot regarding the writers' academic standing and educational credentials with 25.9%, while Allameh Tabatabai University has the top spot regarding the authors' connection with institutions with 36.6%. Semi-experimental research methods were the most popular, with a usage rate of 31.8, followed by a correlation of 29.6. Regression analysis (12.1) and the T-test (14.6) have been the most frequently utilized statistical tests in this area. The most statistical samples in the population of articles under study are students (42.8%), followed by college students (28.5%), and the sampling method with the highest sampling rate is the multi-stage cluster (29.6%). Additionally, the questionnaire accounts for 84.2% of all data-gathering methods [12].

The article by Shieh et al. (2008) on the topic of content analysis of studies in e-learning has been published in five "Social Science Citation Index" journals from 2001 to 2005. Among the 1027 articles published in these journals from 2001 to 2005, 444 are related to Cognition identified in e-learning. These articles were analyzed based on published years, journal, research topic, and number of citations. In addition, 16 highly cited articles on different topics were selected for further analysis according to research settings, participants, research design types, and methods. The analysis of 444 articles revealed that "educational approaches," "learning environment," and "metacognition" were the most popular research topics, with studies on "educational approaches," "information processing," and "motivation" having a more significant impact on subsequent research. Learner log files and online messages were identified as data sources [13].

Bozcurt et al. (2015) investigated the trends in distance education research from 2009 to 2013. Content analysis was mainly used to analyze the current research. The results report was organized into the following categories: research areas, theoretical and conceptual

frameworks, variables, methods, models, strategies, methods of data collection and analysis, and participants. Their study also identified the most frequently used keywords and the most cited authors and studies in distance education. The findings obtained in this study can help explore potential research areas and identify neglected areas in distance education [14].

The Bozkurt et al. (2015) study highlights the importance of studying the most and least-studied research areas in the Distance Education (DE) field. It suggests that further research should focus on individual differences, cognitive processes, learning strategies, and cultural differences. It also suggests exploring learning processes in informal, non-formal environments, OERs, and MOOCs. The authors encourage graduate students to use theoretical backgrounds from various fields, such as business management.

We will also look at other review papers that have been published that are comparable to the topic of this article. Like E-learning for the development of critical thinking: A systematic literature review [16], Systematic Literature Review of E-Learning Capabilities to Enhance Organizational Learning [17], Trends in Educational Research about e-Learning: A Systematic Literature Review (2009–2018)[18], Systematic Literature Review: Online Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic[19], Evaluation of the distance education system (e-learning): A systematic literature review [20], E-learning success determinants in higher education: A systematic literature review from users' perspective[21], Effects of e-learning technologies on university librarians and libraries: a systematic literature review [22], Gamification of e-learning in higher education: a systematic literature review[23], Educational process in E-learning activity for older people: a systematic review [24]. Reviewing the articles confirmed the need to analyze the journal, and now we will explain the method used.

Methodology

This study uses The content analysis approach as a descriptive method [25]. This study's statistical population consists of the ten published issues of Iranian Distance Education from the journal's conversion to English, i.e., from the first issue of volume 1 to the second issue of volume 4, and the Research community consists of 81 articles published in these issues.

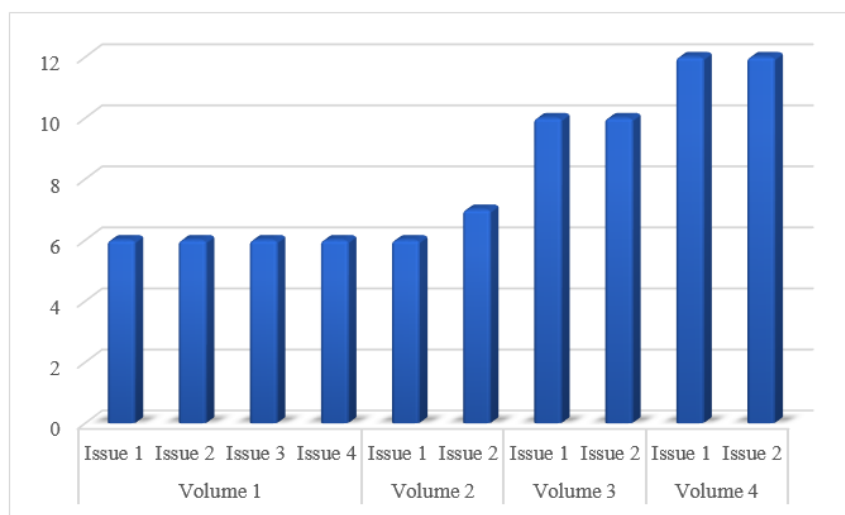


Figure 1. The Division of Articles in Volumes and Issues

For the reliability of the analysis and classification of the variables taken from the articles, content or form validation was applied. According to previous scientific papers, the pertinent themes of the 9-question checklists of this study in the quarterly articles were the unit of

analysis of this research, and the validity of was accepted by seven academic professors at the Alborz campus of Farhangian University. Cronbach's Alpha also confirmed the validity of the questions (Table 1).

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Values for Research Variables (From SPSS)

Cronbach's Alpha	Variable/Question
0.980	1Q
0.990	2Q
0.950	3Q
0.920	4Q
0.990	5Q
0.990	6Q
0.950	7Q
0.930	8Q
0.920	9Q
0.957	All QS

This research technique was gathered by referring to the papers' titles, contents, citations, and the needed information (gender, work position, educational degree, organizational affiliation, topic orientation, etc.). The data were analyzed using Excel and SPSS version 26 and descriptive statistics such as data categorization based on frequency distribution and frequency percentage.

Findings

17% of the articles were produced alone, and 83% of the papers were created in a group, according to Fig 2, which depicts the position of writers in terms of demographic collaboration.

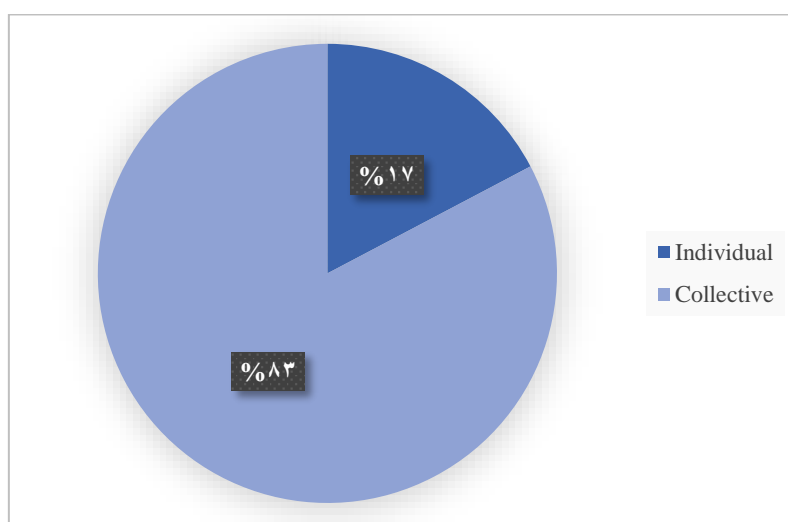


Figure 2. The Status of Authors in Terms of Demographic Cooperation

According to Fig 3, which illustrates the collaboration status of the writers, 74% were written by one person, 17% by two people, 7% by three people, and 2% by four people.

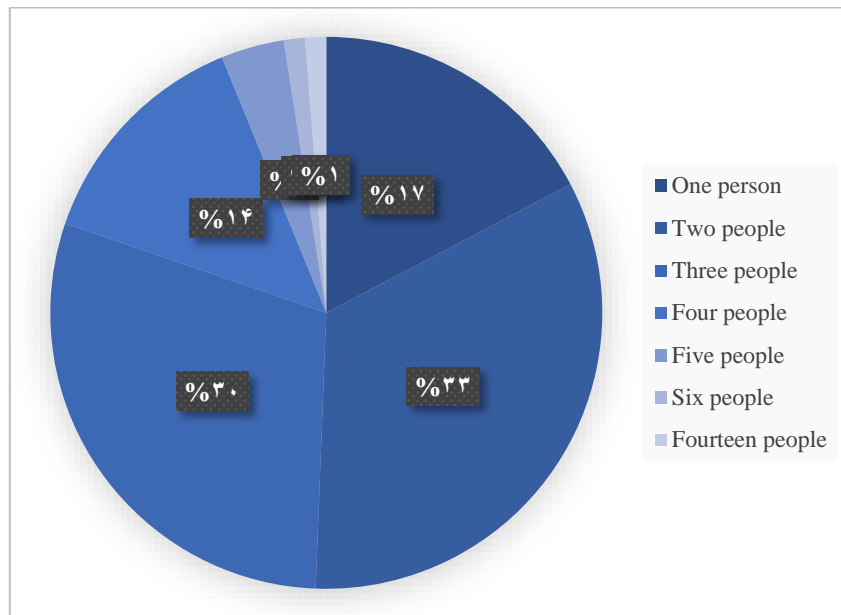


Figure 3. The Collaboration Status of the Authors

Male authors collaborated on 65% of articles with one male author, 12% of articles with two male authors, 6% of articles with three male authors, and 17% of articles written without a male author's participation.

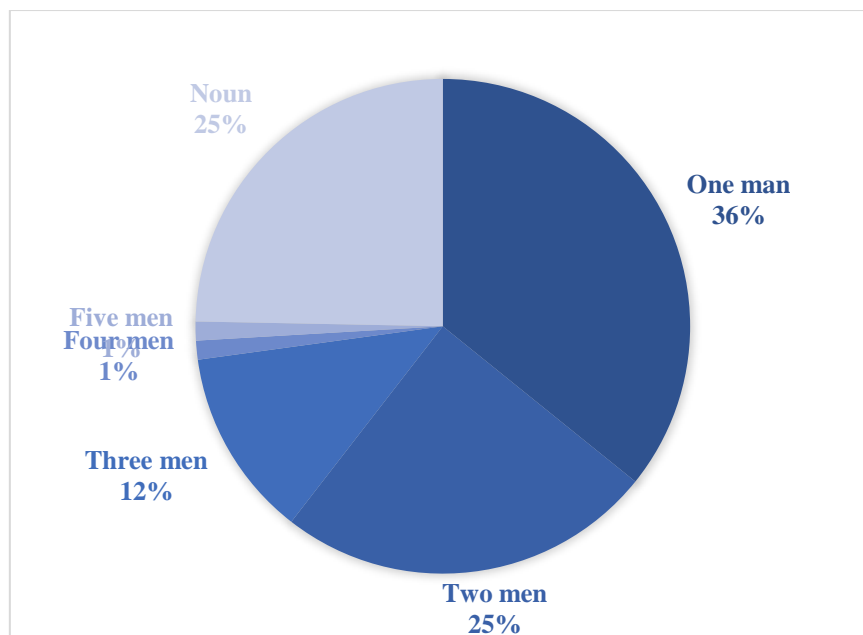


Figure 4. The Collaboration Status of Male Authors

The cooperation status of female writers is depicted in Chart 5 as 25% of articles with one female author and 74% without female authors were authored.

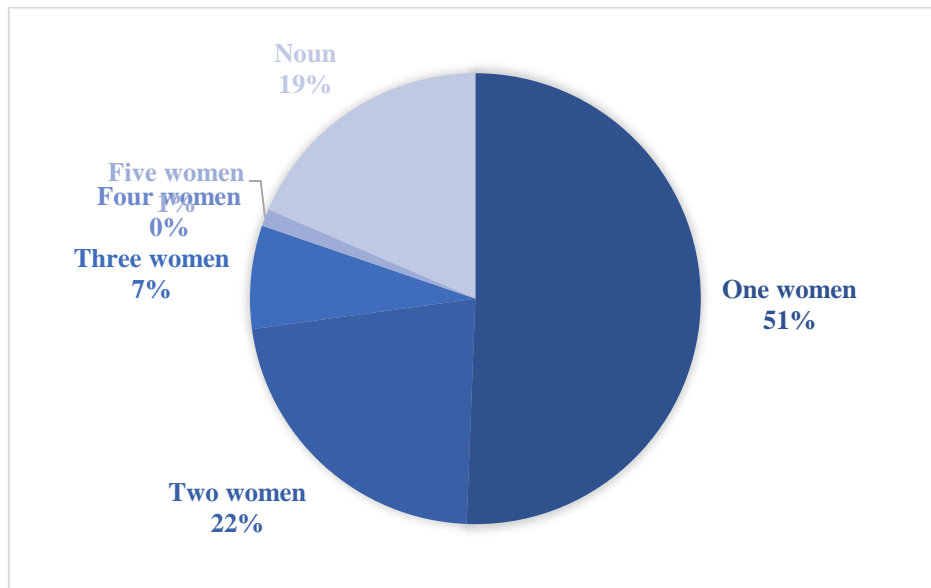


Figure 5. The Collaboration Status of Female Authors

The results of Chart 6 show that the authors of the articles are divided into groups based on their academic backgrounds and positions within the academic hierarchy. Of the total number of authors, 72 are assistant professors, 25 are associate professors, 32 are Ph.D. students, 56 are MA, 35 are Ph.D., 32 are faculty members, 56 are MA students, 3 are educators, 4 are Researchers, and 24 are lecturers.

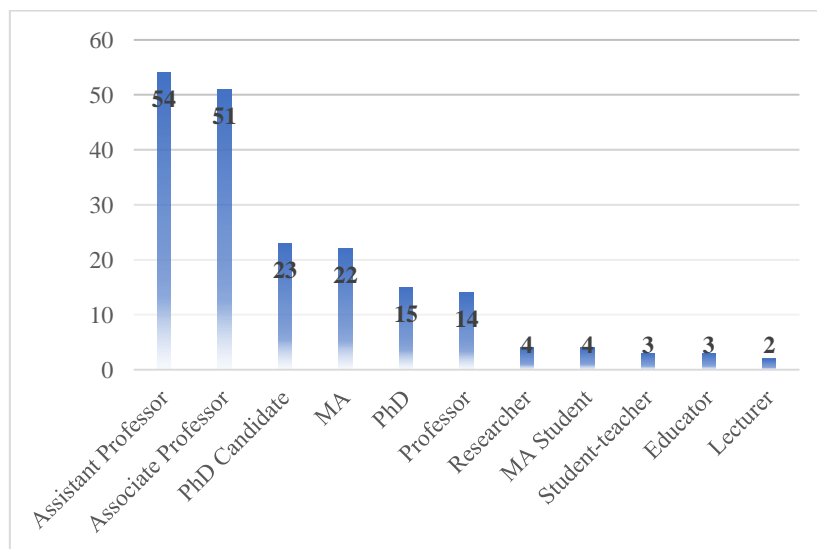


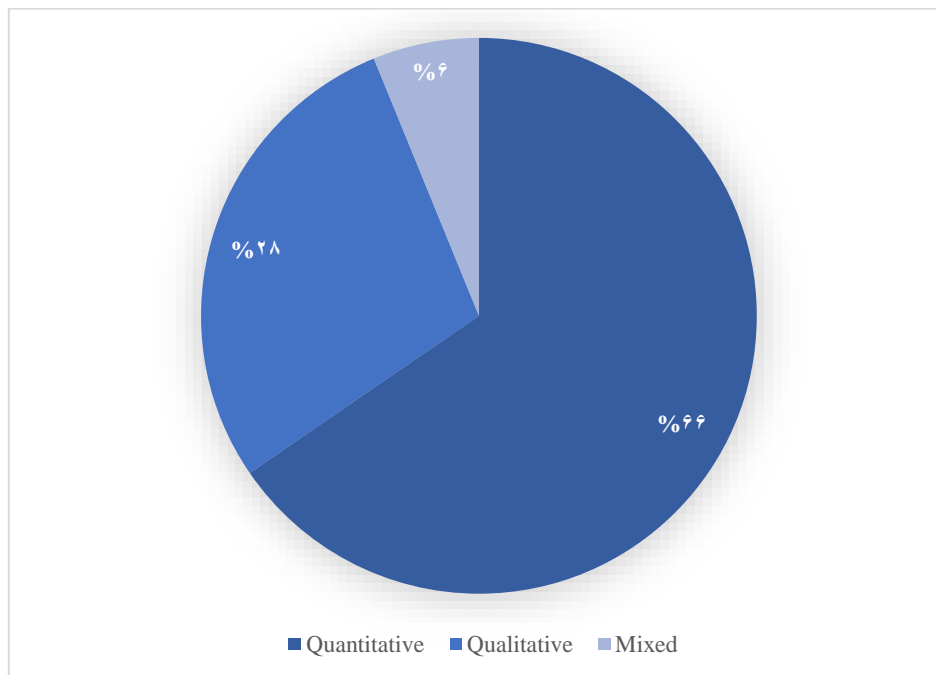
Figure 6. Educational Qualification and Academic Rank of Authors

Table 2's data indicate that Iran, with 72 writers; Brazil, Nigeria, and Alaska, with five authors each; Australia, Algeria, and France, with two authors, have the highest number of authors among the participating nations.

Table 2. Country of international Authors (except Iran)

Country	papers	Authors	universities	
Brazil	3	5	-Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais -State University of Sao Paulo (UNESP) -Federal University of Minas Gerais	[26][27][28]
Nigeria	2	5	-University of Ilorin	[29][30]
Alaska	1	5	-University of Alaska Fairbanks	[31]
Australia	1	2	-The University of Newcastle	[32]
Algeria	1	2	-University Ziane Achour Djelfa+ Oran University	[33]
France	1	1	-ICAR Université Lyon	[34]

The results of Chart 7 show that 66% of the papers using general research methodologies were quantitative, 28% were qualitative, and 6% were mixed.

**Figure 7.** The General Research Methods of Articles

According to Chart 8's findings, of the partial research methods, 42% were surveys, 16% were quasi-experiments, 14% were analytical descriptions, and 4% were interviews. Other scientific methods included grounded theory, mixed methods, meta-analysis, research synthesis, and bibliometrics, while publishing bibliometric research in one of the most recent issues was a novel and constructive change [35]. Also, three articles with a comparative approach were identified [36]– [38].

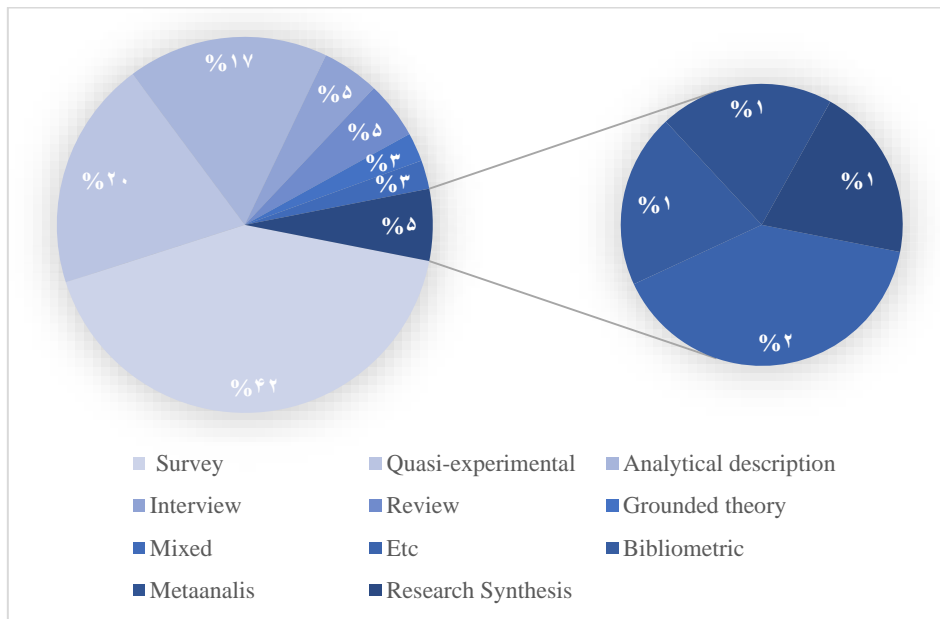


Figure 8. Partial Methods of Research

Chart 9 shows the organizational affiliation of all the authors of the articles separately, including Payame Noor University, University With 72 authors; the University of Tehran, With 17 authors; Islamic Azad, with 15 authors; University of Sistan and Baluchestan with 14 authors; Farhangian University with 13 authors, Shiraz University with eight authors, Tarbiat Modares University with seven authors, Shahid Beheshti University with six authors, have the most frequency.

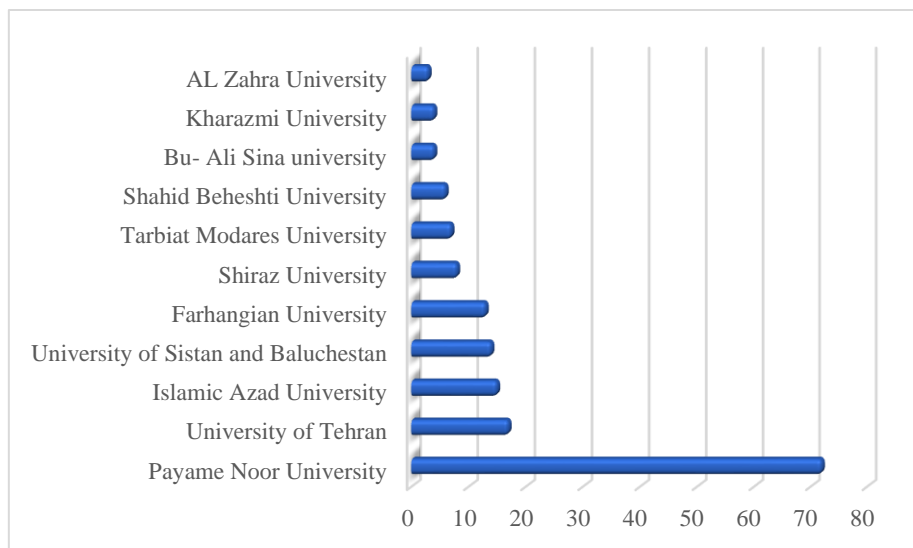


Figure 9. The Organizational Affiliation of All the Authors of the Articles

The highest number of articles were found in the keywords division, according to Chart 10, where E-Learning had 14, Distance Education had 12, Blended Learning had 9, Foreign Language had 8, COVID-19 had 6, Virtual Education had 4, Self-Efficacy had 3, and Evaluation Quality had 3.

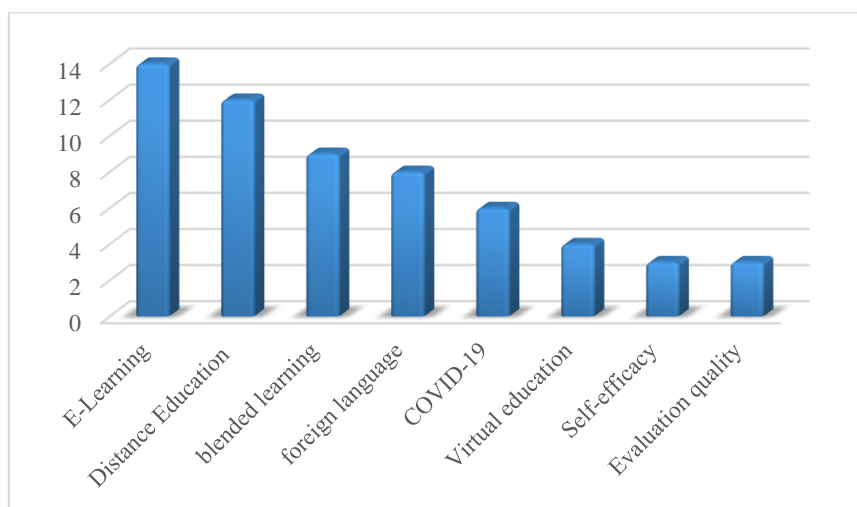


Figure 10. The Most Frequent Keywords

Masoumi Fard, Marjan, Sarmadi, Mohammad Reza, Ajam, and Ali Akbar were the authors of four papers, per the data in Table 3. With three pieces each, Safari, Sana, Khatib Zanjani, Nazila, Seraji, and Farhad occupied the second spot.

Table 3. Prolific authors with most articles and their organizational affiliation

Author	papers	affiliation
Masoumi Fard, Marjan	4	Associate Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Payame Noor University, Tehran, dr.masoomifard@gmail.com
Sarmadi, Mohammad Reza	4	Professor of Education Department, Payame Noor University, Tehran, sarmadi@pnu.ac.ir
Ajam, Ali Akbar	4	Associate Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran, aliakbarajam1387@pnu.ac.ir
Safari, Sana	3	Assistant Professor of Education Management. faculty of educational sciences, Payam Noor University, s.safari@pnu.ac.ir
Khatib Zanjani, Nazila	3	Associate Professor, Education Distance Planning, Department of Educational Sciences of Payam Noor University, Tehran, drkhatibzanjani@yahoo.com
Seraji, Farhad	3	Associate Professor of Curriculum Studies, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, ir.ac fseraji@basu

Discussion and conclusion

purpose of this research was to analyze the articles published in IDEJ. Findings showed that 83% of the papers were created in a group, Which shows the quality of the authorship and disagrees with Mohammadi et al. (2015)[39], even though agreeing with Akhundi (2019)[40], Gholami (2016)[41], Khashei Varnamkhasti et al. (2019)[42], Ghahnaviyeh, et al. (2011)[43], Abdolapour (2022)[12], Rahmati & Karimi (2023)[44], Hajipour, et al. (2016)[45]. This issue is also related to the interdisciplinary topic of the journal because it is related to both

the field of education and technology; also, maybe for this reason, most of the papers were written by two or three people. Participation and cooperation in carrying out the research studies under study were desirable, and this tendency is consistent with the global strategy, according to the results analysis. Because international engagement is emphasized along with author interaction in global methods.

The exciting result is that women are as active as men are, and agree with Gholami (2016)[41], even though they disagree with Ghahnaviyeh et al. (2011)[43], Mohammadi et al. (2015)[39], Rahmati & Karimi (2023)[44]. Contrary to the existing approaches in publishing articles by men, this publication has exhibited diversity and creativity, and the number of female authors is apparent and colorful.

Assistant professors, associate professors, and professors produced 54% of the articles Hajipour et al. (2016)[45], Ghahnaviyeh et al. (2011)[43], and Mohammadi et al. (2015)[39], and somehow with Gholami (2016)[41], and Akhundi (2019)[40]. The scientific level of the authors of the articles is relatively high due to the specialization of this field, and most of the articles were written by the scientific boards of prestigious universities.

Brazil, Nigeria, and Alaska are involved in some articles, which is a good sign, but unfortunately, it did not continue in later issues. Perhaps publishing and inviting foreign authors by printing a particular issue is a good solution.

Most of the papers were written by quantitative methods and highly by survey and quasi-experiment, and mixed methods are used by writers, which is very necessary and applicable due to the complexities in virtual and distance education. The quantitative approach of the journal is considered suitable, and it can be said that the use of new jet methods with a small quantity also shows that the contents of this journal are up-to-date. These findings agree with Gholami (2016), Khashei Varnamkhasti et al. (2019), in the other and disagree with Akhundi (2019), Ghahnaviyeh et al. (2011), Abdolapour (2022)[40]–[43], [46]. This finding suggests that the quality articles did not find favor, which is either because of the desire of Iranian authors, which can be resolved by altering the trend or reception or because the journal's referees do not show much interest in this kind of articles, in which case it is suggested to alter the fundamental approach in the field of arbitration.

Payame Noor University was ranked one, showing its activity, practice, and hardworking faculty. This university can be justified in publishing the most articles given its focus on virtual education and the expertise and experience of its professors in distance learning. However, other universities, especially Farhangian University, should also broaden the scope of publishing their articles there.

Although E-Learning and Distance Education were the primary subject of IDEJ, but new subjects for instance: Organizational Function, virtual ethnography, Workshop Training, Interactive Learners, problem-solving training, human resource development, virtual campus, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Writing Skills, Oral Skills, Online language practice, reading comprehension, math subject, Macro requirements of online education, Self-Efficacy, Academic Self-efficacy, Learning Barriers, Psychomotor Skill, Blended learning, flipped classroom, Predicting Students at Risk of Academic Failure, service organizations, Implicit Feedback, Novice teachers, digital media, Communication Skills, CALL teacher education, Reopening of universities, examination fraud, Proprietorship, academic writing, exceptional schools, Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA), blended learning, English language learning, Scientometrics, Students' Challenges, self-regulated Learning, Resilience, Academic Performance, evaluation of students' performance, Philosophic Mindedness, Structuralism, Educational system, learning activities, Challenges of Distance Education, philosophy for children, Group Dynamic Assessment (GDA), psychological skills, Applying continuous electronic on-the-job training, and Open pedagogy. Also, some studies about COVID-19 show that Paying attention to special educational

conditions [47]– [52]. Additionally, self-efficacy is one of the most significant areas that has attracted much attention. It is recommended that the journal focus more on this problem using global techniques.

The site's design is appropriate and attractive, but the authors' titles are sometimes wrongly inserted. In many cases, the magazine's format is not respected, and the references on the site rarely contain errors. The publication of articles in different years is very different, and there is no consistency. Meanwhile, the call for unique letters can be one of the best ways to attract foreign researchers, and analyzing new and necessary issues can be valuable and fruitful. The efficacy of this journal may be raised by urging teacher preparation institutions to publish more papers, publish more reviews, particularly those that focus on global experiences, and draw in more foreign academics.

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