

Review

# Options in the (Semi-)Periphery: A Review of Multilingual Scholars' Choices of Topics, Methodologies, and Theories in Research and Publishing

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**Abstract:** In most global contexts, academic publishing plays an essential part of scholars' professional lives. For multilingual scholars, who may use multiple languages and publish for different communities, publishing can entail making a range of important choices. To date, while there has been a substantial amount of research on multilingual scholars' choices of language and genre, little has focused on their choices of topics, methodologies, and theories, which are also important aspects of their research and publishing practices. In this review article, I explore specifically what the extant research has found about why multilingual scholars make particular choices of topics, methodologies, and theories outside of Anglophone contexts. Reviewing research published between 2004 and 2023, I found that overall, scholars' choices in such aspects are motivated by their desire for professional success and their aims of making academic and social contributions. Also, their choices can be further complicated by various sociopolitical factors. I argue that the current strand of research mainly focuses on the neoliberal contexts of publishing and the effects of Anglophone academia on global knowledge production, whereas the practices of multilingual scholars outside the Anglosphere can be also affected by many other factors that have received less attention.

**Keywords:** academic publishing; multilingual scholars; research methodology; global knowledge production; center-periphery continuum



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## 1. Introduction

Academic publishing is an important aspect of knowledge production and distribution that dominates the work lives of many scholars around the world [1,2]. On the one hand, scholars may feel pressured to publish to advance their careers and to build their research networks and reputation [3–5]. At the same time, many scholars who work outside of Anglophone contexts and use English as an additional language (EAL) may want to share their work with wider audiences and make academic and social contributions beyond their local community [6,7]. Such goals often entail publishing for multiple communities, which can add complexity to the work lives of multilingual scholars, who often use multiple languages in conducting and distributing research [8–10].

The extant literature demonstrates that multilingual scholars around the world make important choices in relation to academic publishing, such as what language to use, what audience(s) to address, and what genre and mode to use to share their content [11,12]. In terms of linguistic choices, as English has become a prominent language in global academia [5,13,14], many multilingual scholars increasingly feel the need to publish in high-profile English-medium journals, with pressures coming from institutional forces as well as their desires for professional success [15–17]. In addition, many multilingual scholars also publish research relevant to their local communities in national/local/regional languages so they can engage with local audiences, inform local practices, build their local reputation and networks, contribute to national research and policy, and communicate

their research to scholars who may not speak English or have access to English-medium publications [8,15].

In addition to choices of language, multilingual scholars also make choices about genre, that is, the types of text used in certain contexts or communities [18]. While scholars have traditionally published academic genres for academic audiences, such as research articles, laboratory reports, books/book chapters, and reviews, they may also produce “outreach genres” for non-academic readers, such as local practitioners, the general public, and government policymakers [12] (p. 5). These outreach genres may include digital publications such as research blogs, Tweets, and scientific websites [19–21].

However, while a considerable amount of research has explored multilingual scholars’ choices of language and genre, to date only a few studies have considered the role of their choices of topics, methodologies, and theories, which are also important aspects of their research and publishing practices (but see [10,13,22]). Research that talks about such choices made by multilingual scholars, though often in passing, has shown that these scholars constantly negotiate their interests and needs in research and publishing and may thus address different topics for different purposes [6,12,13].

It is worth noting that although multilingual scholars, as defined earlier in this review, technically include all scholars who use multiple languages in conducting and distributing research, in the extant literature the term is more often used to refer to EAL scholars working outside the Anglophone context. These scholars have received more attention in this strand of research largely because their situation may be more complicated than their counterparts based in Anglophone countries in research and publishing. At the local level, EAL scholars in developing countries may experience more restrictions on their freedom to choose research topics and conduct their study due to lack of material and social resources [13,23,24]. Also, there have been more documented cases of violation of academic freedom in the Global South, where many EAL scholars are based, including state forces and censorship that monitor and control the content and form of research and publications [25,26] (p. 1513). At the global level, many EAL scholars that work in the (semi-)periphery are confronted with the unequal power between the center and their local academia in international publishing.

Defined by Alatas [27] in the notion of the center-periphery continuum, the center refers to wealthy Anglophone countries (e.g., the USA, the UK) that have played a leading role in global academic research, including setting standards for academic research and publishing [2,9]. In contrast, periphery countries are less wealthy contexts where academics may struggle over lack of resources in research (e.g., some countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia). In addition, there are semi-periphery countries, which fall between the center and the periphery economically and geographically (e.g., Spain, Portugal, South Africa, Korea). Although developed in economic terms, these countries have less power to affect how the “game” of publishing is played globally than their counterparts in the center [9,27–29] (p. 1). According to an analysis of 45 million publications indexed in the Web of Science since 1970s, center-based countries own three of the top five most prolific publishers in the world—Reed-Elsevier (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Wiley-Blackwell (Hoboken, NJ, USA), Springer (Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany), Taylor & Francis (Abingdon, UK), and Sage (Lawrenceville, GA, USA) [30,31]. Having produced more than half of the journal articles published in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and HSS [32], these publishing giants have the power to affect or even decide what can be published, with journal editors mediating decisions about topics that can be addressed and the theories and methodologies that are accepted.

Furthermore, a large percentage of indexed journals are based in the center, especially the USA and the UK. According to Scimago Journal & Country Rank’s 2022 report, 54 of the top 100 journals on education are based in the USA, while 39 are based in the UK. The two countries also account for 51% of the 22,581 journals in various disciplines indexed in Scopus [33,34]. In addition, journal editors from higher educational institutions in these two countries are also overrepresented in many top-rank journals. In psychology, 61% of

the editors of the top 50 journals are from institutions in the USA, while 7% (the second highest percentage) come from the UK; similarly, 52% of the editors at the top 50 journals in neuroscience are from USA institutions, while 9.18% are from UK universities [35]. Further, although there have been more and more (semi-)periphery scholars actively participating in the review process and/or serving on the editorial board of high-profile English journals, recent research shows that the majority of peer reviewers are still based in the USA or UK [36,37]. As a result, the standards of the top-rank English journals tend to be more related to the ideologies and values of USA and UK academia than are publications from other locations. Beyond having a shared language, scholars in these two countries may find it easier to meet the requirements of these prestigious journals than their counterparts in other parts of the world because of their familiarity with the center's academic culture and their access to resources [13].

In short, all the factors mentioned above may affect the ability of multilingual scholars in the (semi-)periphery to choose what topics to research and write about [9,13]. Importantly, these factors may not only hinder the careers of multilingual scholars in certain contexts, but also lead to the omission of important knowledge from distribution to the global context, including critical issues taking place outside of Anglophone contexts as well as locally developed research methodologies and theories that may not be recognized in the Anglosphere but may still prove valuable [38,39]. Hence, this review of the current literature on multilingual scholars' choices of topics, methodologies, and theories in research and publishing aims to contribute a better understanding of the complicated situations of these scholars working in the (semi-)periphery, including the constraints they face and how they act to achieve their goals. It thus sheds light on future research directions and potential support that could be offered to these scholars. Specifically, this review addresses these questions:

- (1) What motivates multilingual scholars in the (semi-)periphery (MSSP) to choose their topics, methodologies, and theories?
- (2) What are the mediating factors of their choices?

In the rest of the paper, I first describe how I identified and selected studies on this topic for analysis. Next, I report the findings of my analysis of the literature about what drives MSSP to choose their topics and the methodologies and theories used in their research. After that, I discuss the sociopolitical factors that mediate their choices. I conclude by critiquing the extant research and suggesting ideas for future studies.

## 2. Materials and Methods

To explore MSSP's choices in research and publishing based on the research questions above, I searched multidisciplinary databases including the Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar for peer-reviewed research articles and books that were published within the last 20 years. I went a little beyond the typical range of 15 years to include some seminal research in the discipline (e.g., [39,40]), which provides important information regarding the topic of this review. The specifics of the search process are provided in Appendix A.

## 3. The Motivating Factors of MSSP's Choices

According to the literature reviewed, MSSP in general research and publish on a range of issues from local to international contexts [9,13]. While it is impossible to assemble a list of all the specific topics that have been addressed, it is valuable to look at how and why they chose their topics and the methodologies and theories used in their research. Based on the research findings reviewed, MSSP's choices of topics, methodologies, and theories may be motivated by their desire for professional success, their intention to increase the reputation of nationally generated research, and their aim to make social contributions, as I discuss below.

### 3.1. Seeking Professional Success

Not surprisingly, professional success is a major consideration for MSSP when choosing the topics, methodologies, and theories [9,40,41]. Some are interested in publishing domestically to build their local reputation because of the focus of their research and/or the rewards system that encourages publications that address the local context [2,29]. At the same time, many MSSP also publish in high-status English-medium journals because of governmental and institutional policies and evaluation regimes that favor publication in these journals [13,16]. Further, having English-medium publications may be important to MSSP who seek recognition in the international field, because such publications help them to communicate their work to a wider, global audience [42–44]. As a result, MSSP's choices of topics, methodologies, and theories in their research and publishing may be affected by considerations of whether to focus on reaching their local communities or global audiences [13], as I discuss below.

#### 3.1.1. Addressing the Local Context

Some MSSP consistently publish about local issues in domestic journals, because they want to gain visibility and build their reputation in the local context. For instance, in Feng et al.'s [41] study based on semi-structured interviews with 12 Chinese scholars, a computer scientist stressed the importance of publishing his work on local issues in Chinese journals to build connections with local businesses for opportunities to commercialize his research so that more Chinese could read his studies. Likewise, an applied scientist in the same study felt that he should locally share his research on waste management, because it offered knowledge relevant to local enterprises such as sewage treatment plants, which could be direct users of his research and potential investors in his future studies.

Additionally, to keep their position at the university or get promoted, some MSSP may research and publish about local issues to comply with governmental or institutional policies that urge scholars to address the local context in their study [29]. For instance, Sámi University in northern Norway requires its faculty to focus on research that benefits Sámi society, as documented in Thingnes's [45] qualitative study of the choices in publishing of the multilingual faculty in applied sciences at the university. Responding to such policies (along with their intrinsic motivation to serve society), the Sámi-speaking scholars studied and wrote about local issues related to Sámi languages, culture, and people as much as they could. Likewise, some Chinese scholars choose to address local issues in their research partly because of publishing policies that explicitly encourage specific topics to be researched [46]. For instance, the country's 2019 policies require Chinese scholars in humanities and social sciences (HSS) to conduct research that shows Chinese characteristics and encourage them to address topics that promote the country's social achievements and progress [46–48]. As a result, many HSS Chinese scholars tend to focus on issues related to the Chinese society when choosing topics for their research [46,49].

However, it is important to note that MSSP's intent to publish about local issues often goes beyond the pursuit of professional success on an individual level to connect with their interest in serving the larger society, which I discuss below in the section on MSSP's desires to make social contributions.

#### 3.1.2. Reaching the Global Community

In addition/contrast to focusing primarily on local issues, many MSSP are interested in reaching the global community, which often entails publishing in English, because they see publications in top-rank English journals as increasing the readership of their research; also, such publications are often the most rewarded in their institutional context [13]. With concerns about topics derived from their local context being rejected by these English journals, MSSP tend to focus on issues that are likely to appeal to a center-based readership and frame their findings using the language (English), methodologies, and theories originated from and/or widely used in the center [6,9,50]. For instance, the extant research has explored the writing and publishing practices of MSSP in HSS from a range of countries/contexts, includ-

ing but not restricted to Spain [3,13,40], Portugal [9,13], Romania [50], Germany [44], the Nordic region [12,43], and Hungary and Slovakia [13,15]. Overall, findings of this strand of research, which mostly used text analysis [9,13,51], surveys/questionnaires [12,50], and/or interviews [13,43,44], show that many participating MSSP were eager to publish in center-based, English-medium journals to meet institutional requirements for English publications and/or to gain a wide, international readership for their articles. To achieve this goal, many of them expressed willingness (to various extents) to conform to the epistemologies, methodologies, and theories that were recognized and valued in the center academia. This strategy of “methodological projection” [52] (p. 380), which refers to framing a study of local issues according to center-dominant theories or perspectives, has also been reported by scholars outside Europe, including those in Japan [53,54], mainland China [22,55], Hong Kong [6], Kenya [24], Brazil [4], and India [56].

However, some MSSP in HSS have encountered difficulty in using methodological projection to adopt center-based approaches because of the differences between the cultures of center-based academia and their local cultures [10,22,57]. For instance, the Chinese scholars in Flowerdew and Li’s [10] study asserted that Chinese and center-based academics often conduct different types of research. They identified this separation first in terms of the topics being researched, as one participant noted:

Many issues in China can’t be taken to the international arena to study, as the issues do not exist at the international level. For example, we want to propose that China’s single-child policy must be adjusted. . . . But in other countries, the right of birth is a basic human right. They may discuss the right of birth in the realm of private rights; but in our country, the right of birth is not presumed. (p. 9)

In addition to specific research issues, the ways HSS Chinese scholars study and discuss a topic, as participants in Flowerdew and Li’s [10] study suggest can be seen in domestic journal articles, may be different from those used and recognized by center-based scholars. For instance, HSS Chinese scholars’ research is often characterized by “reflective thinking on macroscopic issues” [10] (p. 9) without emphasizing the analysis of robust empirical data, whereas center-based HSS academics highly value empirical studies supported by concrete evidence. Additionally, according to some editors of China’s English-medium HSS journals in Li and Yang’s [58] (p. 251) research, features (i.e., “recurrent issues” in the researchers’ original words) such as “over-pragmatism” and “cultural nationalism” may also make it difficult for center-based readers to understand HSS Chinese scholars’ work. Especially, one of the editors noted that:

I suppose foreign scholars may have problems in getting the ideas of Chinese scholars. Sometimes it’s really difficult to engage in an effective dialogue between Chinese and Western scholars. It seems that they talk in different discourses and/or paradigms. [58] (p. 251)

In short, the distinctions between the cultures of China and center-based academia can be seen both methodologically and theoretically. The perceptions of such separation and thus the difficulty of framing their research according to center-based perspectives were also mentioned by HSS Chinese scholars in Ge [22] and Min [57]. These scholars’ situation may partially explain the relatively small number of Chinese HSS research in global publishing compared with the larger number of Chinese research in science, technology, and medicine (STM), the topics of which, along with the methodologies and theories used in it, are often less culturally and contextually sensitive [58].

In addition to those Chinese scholars, HSS academics in Africa have been also noted to face the risk of being marginalized in or excluded from the global publishing because of the methodologies and theories they use. Based on interviews conducted with university administrators and faculty members in Zimbabwe as well as data drawing from a roundtable discussion, Jeater [59] studied how the power dynamics between the Global North and the Global South may affect African scholars’ publishing experiences and thus their role in knowledge production. She found that Zimbabwean scholars shared some

research practices that were not recognized or valued in the center-based academia, such as the adoption of a positivist approach in their study. Although such an approach is rooted in the local context of Zimbabwe and suits the purpose of the local scholars' research, which is largely practical- and policy-oriented, it is considered more than just "unfashionable" [59] (p. 17) by many top-rank international journals and often leads to failure in publishing. These findings are in line with Collyer's [60] observations in his interview-based study conducted with "knowledge workers" (p. 60) such as publishers, editors, and scholars in South Africa, Brazil, and Australia, which explored the global dynamics underlying international publishing and knowledge production. Specifically, he found that the center-based academia may be "inwardly focused" and thus "suspicious of knowledge" from external sources such as the Global South [60] (p. 64). In other words, the center-based academia has its own expectations of what theories and methodologies should be used and how. Research that does not meet those expectations is likely to be rejected.

In response to the differences between center-based academia and their local contexts, MSSP have tried various strategies to publish in high-status English-medium journals, such as choosing a topic related to a larger population [6,12] and shifting the emphasis of a study from practical implications to methodological and theoretical contributions [13,40]. For instance, four of the HSS Hong Kong scholars interviewed by Li and Flowerdew [6] felt it would be better to research problems occurring in mainland China, believing that research on local issues in a relatively small place like Hong Kong would be seen as too limited by center-based journal gatekeepers. Similarly, three of the Swedish historians and two of the Swedish anthropologists in McGrath's [12] questionnaire-based study chose to include comparisons between a local case and cases based in other locations in their papers, hoping that the comparative dimension would enhance the connection to a wider international audience.

Another strategy that MSSP may adopt is to shift the emphasis of an article from discussing the implications of the findings to highlighting a paper's methodological and theoretical contributions. The HSS Swedish scholars in McGrath's [12] study, who had successfully published both locally and internationally, produced academic publications that emphasized methodological and/or theoretical approaches for scholars in the international context but outreach publications on local social issues for practitioners in Sweden. When moving from local to international, these scholars switched from a relatively narrow focus on local issues and implications to methods and/or theories that might be less culturally specific and thus more easily understood and accepted by readers outside Sweden. Similar patterns are identified among the MSSP in Lillis and Curry's [13] longitudinal text-ethnographic study of the publishing practices of 50 European scholars from Slovakia, Hungary, Spain, and Portugal.

In sum, the desire for professional success often influences MSSP's choices of topics, methodologies, and theories in research and publishing. These choices can be shaped by considerations of publishing policies, academic evaluation criteria, the expectations of the target journal, and the audiences of their research. For some MSSP, these considerations and priorities may change over time, depending on their interests and pressures at different career stages [15]. When targeting the local community, many MSSP address topics related to their national context to build their local reputation; whereas to reach international communities, they tend to research and write about issues that appeal to the global audiences and may show conformity to center-based epistemologies, methodologies, and theories. Research in this strand has mainly drawn on qualitative methods, especially interviews, to achieve deep understandings of the complex relationships among different academic communities and the individual experiences of MSSP (e.g., [6,41,43]). However, many of these studies focus on MSSP's language choices, only briefly discussing their choices of topics, methodologies, and theories. In the next section, I focus on MSSP's choices inspired by their goal of increasing the reputation of the research conducted in their national context.

### 3.2. Increasing the Reputation of National Research

In parallel with the personal desire to achieve professional success, many MSSP want to publish to increase the reputation of research conducted by scholars in their local/national context [6,7,22,55]. To this end, they may choose to share local/national research findings with the international community [7,22,40,55] and/or enrich center-based theories [6,13,61].

#### 3.2.1. Sharing National Research

Some MSSP publish the findings of their studies on local issues internationally to draw global attention to research generated in their national context [7,22]. For example, Xu [55] qualitatively analyzed 172 institutional policy documents on incentives for publishing in China and interviewed 65 HSS academics in six Chinese universities. Her participants generally supported the idea of “going-out”, meaning publishing about Chinese topics of interest to international audiences to advance the voices of Chinese scholars, add to global understandings of China, and enhance the impact of Chinese research in the world. However, to balance the “going-out” policy, over the last five years the Chinese government has issued a series of policies that highlight the importance of domestic publications on national/local issues and encourage institutions and scholars to respect both national and international research [62,63]. The emphasis on national/local publications in the new policies may urge scholars to re-consider the focus of their research, the purpose of their publishing practices, and their target audiences, which requires further investigation through research.

Similar to the scholars in Xu’s [55] study, the MSSP in Rounsaville and Zemliansky’s [7] interview-based study and Ge’s [22] qualitative research also spoke to the value of sharing national research with international audiences. In Rounsaville and Zemliansky’s [7] study, the four Ukrainian scholars, two in social sciences and two in natural sciences and engineering, considered it important to publish internationally about national issues to promote the achievements of Ukrainian researchers. They were strongly motivated by both personal interest in publishing in journals outside their country on topics related to Ukraine and the aim of raising the status of Ukrainian science. Likewise, findings from an interview-based study on the publishing experiences of nine Chinese scholars in a Chinese academic research institution suggest that MSSP have much to add to international academic conversations [22]. For instance, one of the Chinese participants, a historian, described ancient Chinese history as “vivid” and worthy of “international attention” [22] (p. 47). She thus wanted to help center-based scholars who could not understand the Chinese language to learn about Chinese archaeology by publishing in English-medium international journals.

In all these cases, the locality of MSSP’s research can contribute to center-based discussions of their topics and enhance the reputation of local research globally. However, some research have found that locality could also be a problem in terms of the responses of journal editors and reviewers, as it might fail to meet the interests of international audience and/or the requirements of the target journal [60,64,65]. Later in this paper, I will discuss how the ideologies of journal gatekeepers act a mediating factor in MSSP’s choices in publishing.

#### 3.2.2. Enriching Center-Based Theories

As noted, some MSSP also aim to enrich center-based theories through their academic research and publishing. Indeed, one of the 15 HSS Chinese scholars in Li and Flowerdew [6] and some of the HSS Chinese scholars in Xu’s [55] (2019) study all spoke against the “neo-colonialist view” [6] (p. 288) that only the West is capable of producing theory. Instead, they believed that the local aspects of their research could add to current discussions of theories in their disciplines. As one of the participants in Li and Flowerdew’s [6] research, whose topic was the linguistic structures of Chinese dialects, noted:

Linguistics is in fact still quite oriented to Western languages. Yet some structures in the oriental languages are not found in Western languages. . . . Something

which is absent in Western language but is found in the Chinese dialects we've investigated—this can make up for their theory. (p. 285)

Thus, this participant aimed to contribute to the theories developed in the center by introducing the linguistic structures he had identified in Chinese dialects. In short, by enriching center-based theories, these MSSP hoped to help global audiences understand the cultural and social situation of the local context as well as the academic achievements made by local scholars, and thereby to increase the reputation of scholarship from their country.

Moreover, several MSSP in Xu's [55] study criticized the practice of using center-based theories to interpret data collected in the (semi-)periphery, with the local experiences being used only as "raw material" (p. 165) for center-based scholars to theorize. They argued that publications based on such practices add little to theoretical discussions on topics in the local academia and that Chinese scholars in HSS should promote their own theories internationally. These views resonate with the new policies on publications in China that encourage high-quality publications in domestic journals about local issues of importance to Chinese people [48,62,63].

In sum, with the aim of increasing the reputation of national research, MSSP might discuss issues in the local context to add to the global understanding of their country and draw international attention to local research. However, some MSSP have gone beyond reporting on local research findings to enriching center-based theories. By drawing on local theories or theorizing findings in local research, they added to the global conversation. Research that supports this theme mainly uses qualitative methods such as document/text analysis and interviews and is mainly guided by social practice theories and the center-periphery model. The use of these theories contributes to important understandings of MSSP's choices in their local and global contexts and may help analyzing these scholars' agency in their research and publishing practices.

### 3.3. Making Social Contributions

Beyond adding to scholarly conversations and generating reputation, many MSSP are also enthusiastic about making social contributions to their national societies through their research [6,7,45]. These scholars, who work in various disciplinary fields including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and HSS, care about the needs and interests of the local people as they choose topics, methodologies, and/or theories [6,7,45]. In particular, they are interested in using their publications to inform the practices of local communities [13,66] and educate the local public [22,41,45].

#### 3.3.1. Informing the Practice of Local Communities

When considering topics for research and publication, some MSSP want to help improve the practices of local communities by addressing the needs and interests of practitioners in various fields and the government. For instance, in Lillis and Curry's [13] study of European scholars in psychology and education, some participants mentioned publishing for the purpose of bettering local psychological and educational practices. Several scholars who were very experienced in publishing in international academic journals later switched to publishing for local applied audiences, that is, readers whom the scholars saw as "direct users of their work", such as teachers and healthcare workers [13] (p. 42).

These concerns were shared by the HSS Chinese scholars in Flowerdew and Li's [10] research, who wanted to inform policymaking in China. Specifically, one scholar had expertise in social policies and chose topics related to the social welfare system of mainland China, while the other, an educator, published several books and frequently contributed to discussions about educational issues in local newspapers to share his opinions and recommendations for policy. Similar practices and aspirations were identified among the 14 Chinese business and management scholars in Li's [66] interview-based study. These scholars enthusiastically investigated topics that offered useful information to local managers, businesspeople, and policymakers. Beyond the academic literature, their research was informed by exchanges with local practitioners and knowledge of the "Chinese real-

ity" [66] (p. 45). In short, MSSP in these studies emphasized the importance of publishing on topics that were meaningful to their society and offered implications and solutions.

### 3.3.2. Educating Public Audiences

A related aim for many MSSP is to educate the general public through publications about topics and issues of local interest. For example, by communicating with non-specialist audiences through outreach publications on social issues related to their daily life, the Chinese scholars in Li and Flowerdew's [6] study hoped to take on "the role of public intellectuals" who had "a commitment not simply to a professional or private domain but to a public world" (p. 289). One participant in particular was enthusiastic about writing and publishing music reviews for Chinese audiences to provide them with access to a form of music education.

Similar commitments were made by scholars in central and northern European countries (e.g., [9,13]). For instance, a Slovak psychologist in Lillis and Curry's [13] study noted the desire to use his publications to introduce sexual education to people with disabilities and to bring public attention to their sexual health. Especially, he noted that he managed to publish one article about on the topic in an English-medium journal based in Central Europe, which may be accessed by audiences beyond the boundary of Slovakia. Likewise, the Sámi scholars in Thingnes' [45] study were working to promote the languages, culture, and values of the Sámi people through their publications on local issues, such as Sámi reindeer husbandry, the linguistic characteristics of Sámi languages, and Sámi-Norwegian bilingualism. Moreover, some European scholars see publishing through digital media such as research blogs and websites as an important means to share their work with the general public, which allowed them to address a variety of topics in mixed languages and genres that may interest and be accessible by non-academic audiences [19,20,67].

In sum, when situated in different contexts and having different interests and needs, MSSP make different decisions about what, where, and when to publish. Their choices of topics cover issues that are decided based on their aims to achieve professional success, increase the reputation of national research, and make social contributions. Indeed, MSSP may choose different topics and use different methodologies and/or theories for different audiences. Research in this strand is largely guided by social practice theories and the center-periphery model, and has mainly used qualitative methods, including questionnaire, policy/text analysis, and semi-structured interviews, to explore the dynamic processes of academic publishing and the experiences of individual and groups of scholars.

In addition to MSSP's own interests and needs, a range of contextual factors also affects their publishing practices, such as publishing policies and institutional evaluation of scholars, as noted in this section. In the next section, I further discuss two mediating factors identified in the literature that are less explicit than official policies but may still play an important role in shaping MSSP's choices in research and publishing: notions of ideological correctness within in specific contexts and the ideologies of journal gatekeepers.

## 4. The Mediating Factors of MSSP's Choices

The literature shows that real choices in academic research and publishing may be limited for some MSSP because of contextual features that can affect their experiences and decisions [9,13]. In addition to the cases discussed in the previous section, the effects of publishing policies and institutional evaluation on MSSP's choices of topic, methodologies, and theories have been addressed in many other studies as well. For instance, the Indian management scholars in Bell et al.'s [56] interview-based study reported that they were discouraged from using qualitative methods by their institution and were asked to conduct positivist, quantitative research instead, because both the institutions and the Indian government had adopted certain international business school journal rankings that included largely USA journals where quantitative research was established as "normal science" [56] (p. 542) in global management research. Similarly, in many universities in mainland China, the widely applied tenure track personnel system, which requires faculty

members to publish a certain number of papers within a fixed timeframe, may have enhanced the publish-or-perish mentality deeply rooted in the minds of many young Chinese scholars [68]. Under such pressure, some scholars may try to increase their chances of publishing by pursuing popular research topics and making any changes requested by their target journal gatekeepers even if the suggestions may go against their original intentions; also, to increase the number of publications, they may create multiple manuscripts out of one piece of research, which differ in form but share content [61,68]. In short, such institutional requirements may drive those emerging researchers to publish for the sake of publishing without making meaningful contributions to society or academia [69,70].

In addition to such publishing policies explicitly announced through written documents, implicit rules in the field of global academic publishing have been also found to play a prominent role in shaping MSSP's choices of topics, methodologies, and theories, including notions of ideological correctness within specific contexts [6,39] and the ideologies of journal gatekeepers [13,39,65], which I discuss next.

#### 4.1. Ideological Correctness

Ideological correctness, or the adherence to certain “ideological and political orthodoxies” [71] (p. 164), has been reported to be an important factor shaping many MSSP's choices in publishing [10,40]. By “orthodoxies”, Hall refers to widely accepted beliefs in the form of “theological ideas” that are used as “practical guiding principles” [71] (p. 165). In this sense, orthodoxies may be understood as what is “in accordance with what is established by the society/government as correct”, “conventional”, “prevalent”, and “normal” [72] (p. 171). Rooted in these orthodoxies, ideological correctness thus represents the types of values, views, and behaviors that are perceived as legitimate and are thus promoted and circulated within the country/society.

In particular contexts, being ideologically correct functions nearly as a requirement for scholars [55,61]. According to Flowerdew and Li [10], many academics in their study have been affected by the ideology “to save the country” (p. 10), that is, to help solve issues related to the local society through their research. Such a “patriotic orientation” [10] (p. 10) has been supported by the country's publishing policies in recent decades [62,73,74] and may serve as one of the driving forces of these scholars' focus on local issues in their research [41,46].

Furthermore, Chinese scholars in HSS are encouraged to use locally developed theories to guide their research on Chinese issues, such as “the socialist core value system” [74] (p. 2) and the localized Marxism—an adapted version of Marx and Engels's theories grounded in the Chinese context [47,73]. Rooted in the local context, these theories are considered to have the potential to advance national values and thus help “counteract the hegemony of the Western ideology” [46] (p. 564).

In addition to national ideology and policy, supranational politics also affect MSSP's experiences in academic publishing [13,22,39]. For example, Rounsaville and Zemliansky's [7] study of publishing by four Ukrainian scholars found that when scholars wanted to publish in foreign journals, they needed to take cultural differences into consideration and be careful not to “describe [the foreign] government in negative way” (p. 630). For these scholars to publish, it was important to think about the preferences of these countries' governments in relation to their political stance to ensure successful publishing.

In short, choices made by MSSP can be restricted by their perceptions of the need to adhere to certain ideological and political orthodoxies, including national ideologies and supranational politics. Based on the above discussion, the requirement to be ideologically correct is related to the need to pass state censorship. However, few studies have discussed the effects of censorship on MSSP's research and publishing practices based on their specific working context, especially how such forces may shape their specific choices of research topics, methodologies, and theories.

In addition to national ideologies and supranational politics, systems of ideas that are rooted in larger cultural backgrounds, that is, the ideologies of journal gatekeepers, may also have an effect on MSSP's publishing practices, which I discuss next.

#### 4.2. Ideologies of Journal Gatekeepers

Another factor influencing the choices made by MSSP in publishing is the ideologies of journal gatekeepers, which refers to the values and beliefs of the reviewers and editors about what topics, methodologies, and theories are acceptable (or not) in academic publishing and knowledge production [65]. Journal gatekeepers thus play a powerful role in determining whether particular texts, including research findings and the way they are presented, can be published in their journal [28,75].

While all knowledges are local in some way, that is, rooted in a certain context or culture, they are not equally valued [13,76]. When the features of some locations, such as the interests and practices of the center-based academia, are seen as universal and treated as the norm or default, they become the standards based on which all other localities are evaluated [13,77]. Research and publications produced from outside the center then risk being labeled as problematic, invalid, or unimportant [27,28]. In Collyer's [60] study, when asked to explain the lack of interest in work from the Global South, one of the editors, who is from the USA, noted that they "very rarely get serious papers from developing countries. . . it is just a different kind of world" and frankly admitted the different styles of work of MSSP are often "not to our [their] taste (p. 65)". As a result, MSSP may be asked to account for their choices of topics, methodologies, and/or theories emerging from a specific local context in ways that center-based scholars do not have to do [13,57,65].

For instance, the Taiwanese linguists and educators in Min's [62] interview-based study noticed that they needed to make more effort to justify their topics to international readers as compared with their counterparts in center-based countries. Although these center-based scholars also need to provide strong rationales for their choices of topics, they are often less vulnerable to the criticism of being "parochial" [64] (p. 134), because international readers tend to be more familiar with issues in their own contexts and thus can make connections more easily. Similarly, several Spanish and Hungarian scholars in Lillis and Curry's [13] study reported a lack of interest from high-status English-medium journals in locally generated qualitative findings in their fields of education and psychology. In particular, a Spanish psychologist argued that certain methodologies, such as case study, "are okay for Americans but not necessarily for Spaniards" [13] (p. 141). In this sense, journal gatekeepers appear to consider the center as the default location in academic knowledge production; based on this stance they evaluate and may exclude knowledge derived from the (semi-)periphery [59,60].

Moreover, when there are differences or conflicts in views between scholars from the (semi-)periphery and reviewers/editors from the center, the former may feel the need to compromise with the interests and stance of the latter in order to get published [6,39,56]. For example, in Lillis and Curry's [39] study, two psychologists from Central Europe made a major change to their arguments from "contrast to confirmation" (p. 20) to get their paper published. The original version signaled differences between the findings of their study and an important previous study conducted by scholars from the center, while in the final version their claim of difference became one of confirmation. When explaining this change to the researchers, the lead author referred to their position as scholars in the semi-periphery, noting that "saying something from [central Europe] which is new is not good, not allowed. Of course, it's absolutely their perspective to see [central Europe] as, I don't know, a tribe trying to do something scientific" [39] (p. 22). In short, in wanting to get published, the scholars did not feel able to challenge established views from the center and instead provided findings to please the journal gatekeepers.

The compromise that MSSP may feel they have to make because of the center's stereotypes is also mentioned by Flowerdew and Li [10] and Ge [22]. The Chinese HSS scholars in both studies noted that to succeed in publishing, they as (semi-)periphery

scholars needed to cater to the center's interests through what they called "self-colonialism". They felt that journal gatekeepers did not want to see "the real China" but rather the China of their imaginations, which was "bloody" and "negative" [10] (p. 8). In other words, these scholars felt they were expected to present research findings in ways that met the center's expectation of discussions on the research topic instead of what their research actually found.

However, the fact that many MSSP struggle with marginalized status relative to scholars in the center in terms of English-medium publishing does not indicate that the former is inferior. As Casanave [78] argues, research should avoid stigmatizing, consciously or unconsciously, MSSP, which unfairly underrates their contributions and does not truly reflect the complex process of knowledge production.

In addition, although they may face a disadvantaged situation in terms of English-medium publishing, MSSP show great agency in engaging with the power dynamics between them and center-based journal gatekeepers [13,39]. For instance, some MSSP may choose to collaborate with other academics [13,22,57]. Working with center-based collaborators can help MSSP investigate issues that may be beyond their expertise and adapt their theories and methods to the interests of the center in international publishing [13,57]. The European scholars in Lillis and Curry's [39] study, the mainland Chinese scholars in Feng et al.'s [41] study, and the Taiwanese scholars in Min's [57] study all noted that they received assistance from academics from the center to bring the content and style of their paper in line with the dominant perspective and writing conventions of the Anglophone countries where their target journals were based. Moreover, collaborations with colleagues from other locations may activate MSSP's interests in new areas and give them a chance to write about topics that interest them. One Chinese participant in Ge's [22] study mentioned that working on an article with an Australian scholar encouraged her to explore a topic more deeply. Subsequently, she published several articles about issues related to that topic through collaborations with other scholars. This advantage of collaboration was also recognized by a participant in Lillis and Curry's [39] study who joined a European Union-funded research project and appreciated the chance to work with others on a certain issue. Being a partner in the grant provided him with the funds to hire people to collaborate on a topic that no one else in his department was interested in.

Another strategy used by MSSP to manage their demands and interests in writing for publication, as found by Curry and Lillis [29], is to develop English-medium national (EMN) journals as editors and reviewers themselves. These journals allowed MSSP to publish about local issues in English, thus helping them to make commitment to the local community while meeting the institution's requirement about English publications. Troubled by the unequal power between many (semi-)periphery authors and the gatekeepers of English-medium journals, these multilingual scholars "open up new intellectual spaces" to challenge the current global knowledge production and evaluation system [29] (p. 17).

In short, the ideologies of gatekeepers may influence MSSP's choices particularly if they want to publish in high-status English-medium journals. However, MSSP in the literature reviewed in this section show agency in tackling the power relations between the center and the (semi-)periphery through their publishing practices, such as collaborating with others and creating their own journals.

In sum, the choices of topics, methodologies, and theories made by MSSP can be mediated by the ideologies of journal gatekeepers and their own intention to be ideologically correct. Although these factors may compromise academic freedom and thus limit academics' choices, scholars studied in the literature exert agency in confronting the difficulties and power dynamics existing in both national and international context and actively negotiate their needs and interests to increase their chances of successful publishing.

## 5. Discussion

In this review article I have explored what the current literature says about MSSP's choices of topics, methodologies, and theories in academic research and publishing. Overall,

these choices have only briefly been discussed in the literature, generally as a supplement to discussions of MSSP's choices of language, genre, and/or publishing venues. The findings of this body of research show that in contexts that experience various constraints, many MSSP need to "negotiate their interests and demands" [40] (p. 663) in research and publishing by making specific choices [7,13]. To achieve academic publishing in the desired outlets, these scholars may choose various topics for different purposes and audiences; also, they may describe their use of methodologies in different ways and/or draw on different theories according to the specific contexts where they conduct their research and intend to publish their work [10,12,13]. In addition, MSSP's choices in research and publishing, which is a social practice situated in specific context, are mediated by a series of sociopolitical factors, including (but not restricted to) governmental and institutional policies [7,41]; notions of ideological correctness [6,39,46]; and the ideologies of journal gatekeepers [13,64,65].

So far, the extant research on MSSP's research and publishing experiences has had a dominant focus on the neoliberal context of publishing, including the pressure to publish as a result of institutional policies for tenure and promotion/evaluation on scholars and the effects of the center-based academia on global publishing and knowledge production, especially the dynamics among different geolinguistic contexts in global knowledge production. However, MSSP's choices in research and publishing can be also affected by other factors, many of which have received less or little attention in the extant research, including:

1. Access to training and literature [79,80]. In Xu's [80] narrative study on 104 Chinese scholars, 13 participants noted that they did not have access to the most recent issues of international journals, while 37 reported a lack of mentors that could guide them through the research and publishing practices. Such issues have been also reported by scholars in Sri Lanka [79], Cambodia [81], Iran [23], Lebanon [82], and Africa [59].
2. Financial conditions [81–83]. MSSP who are struggling to make a living may conduct certain types of research for money. For instance, the Cambodian scholars who were poorly paid in Heng et al.'s [81] study tended to conduct consultancy research for non-governmental organizations or other institutions to earn extra money and published it locally in the form of working papers or commissioned research reports. Additionally, MSSP may choose to study topics that are more likely to be funded; the requirements made by the funding organization(s) may in turn affect the way they approach and research the topic and present their findings [59].
3. Institutional and/or disciplinary privileges [46,80,84]. Generally, is more prestigious a university is, the more resources and freedom it may have in designing its own agenda and providing support to its faculty [46]. Also, some MSSP may be attracted to enter fields where researchers may publish more often and more quickly on practical and/or trendy topics [80,84].
4. Social network [3,61,85]. Many junior scholars and returnee academics in the (semi-) periphery suggested that having limited connections with journal reviewers and editors in their home country makes it difficult for them to fit into the local academia [3,39,80]. Similarly, connections with scholars based in the center are indispensable for MSSP who want to publish in that community [60,85,86].
5. Competing ideologies promoted by their country and institution [46,75]. Some MSSP have reported the tension between the local government's emphasis on national values and ideologies and their institution's ambition in being competitive globally by producing high-quality research that can be published in high-profile English journals [41,46,87].
6. The degree of academic freedom [88–91]. In addition to dynamics within the local context, such as party control and censorship on scholarship, MSSP's research and publishing experiences may be also affected by the international relationship between their home country and the center. For instance, the turbulent relationship between Iran and the Anglophone countries, especially the USA, has negatively affect Iranian scholars' global publishing experiences [92]. Especially, the restrictions on importing

technology and material to Iran has made it difficult for some local scholars to conduct their research [23,92].

While all these factors can have potential effects on MSSP's decisions on what they can research and publish about and how, they have not been explicitly researched. Notably, some of the factors mentioned, such as censorship on scholarship and lack of access to research literature and funding, may be of less concern in (semi-)periphery countries in Europe than in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; hence, scholars who have been researching MSSP's publishing practices in the former, many of whom have played a leading role in this strand of research (e.g., Bennett; Burgess; Lillis and Curry), may not have centered those issues in their research questions and analysis, though these can have a significant impact on scholars in other contexts. Therefore, it is important for researchers to go beyond the current dominant focus on the neoliberal context of publishing and the influence of center-based countries on global knowledge production to consider what other factors, whether international, intranational, or national/local, may affect the practices of academic research and publishing knowledge production.

## 6. Conclusions

The current literature shows that MSSP tend to experience complex situations when making choices in research and publishing. While many scholars are feeling pressured to publish internationally, center-based (English-medium) journals may consider their topics, methodologies, and theories as "parochial" [64] (p. 134) or irrelevant and thus reject their manuscripts. In response, these scholars are constantly negotiating their needs and interests in research and publishing. Their choices of research topics, methodologies, and theories may be motivated by the desire for professional success, the intention to increase the reputation of national research, and the aim to make social contributions. The sociopolitical factors that can mediate such choices made by MSSP include governmental and institutional publishing policies, ideological correctness, and the ideologies of journal gatekeepers. However, there are many other factors that may also affect their decisions of what to research and published about but are under-researched. Importantly, although experiencing various constraints in the local and/or global context, MSSP still show great agency in coping with the difficulties they confront in the research and publishing processes to achieve their goals.

### *Future Directions*

As the current literature on MSSP's choices has largely focused on their choices of language and genre, further research is needed to explore these scholars' experiences with making choices about specific issues, methodologies, and theories in their research and writing, the rationales they provide for their choices, and the outcomes of these choices. Studies on this topic can promote understandings of how important issues and aspects of knowledge may be missing in the global discussion [8] as well as how scholar support can be provided. The findings may also have the potential to inform publishing policy making.

In addition, most of the research reviewed has investigated the experiences of MSSP in HSS fields, whose topics may be more culturally and contextually specific and more sensitive than those of natural sciences and engineering. However, several scholars in STEM also shared similar interests and concerns with their colleagues in HSS as they made their choices, such as the computer scientist in Feng et al.'s [41] research, who was interested in publishing in local journals to build his local social networks and reputation, and the chemist and computer mathematician in Rounsaville and Zemliansky's [7] study, who published internationally about national issues to promote the achievements of Ukrainian scholars. Hence, it may be worth to explore STEM MSSP's experience of choosing the topics, methodologies, and theories for their research in future studies.

Moreover, while there is considerable research on multilingual scholars in Europe and East Asia, few studies have explored the experiences of those in Africa, Middle East, and some parts of Latin America (but see, e.g., [4,5]). More research on MSSP in these contexts

may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of global scholars' publishing experiences.

Finally, as noted in the Discussion, in addition to the neoliberal context of publishing and the effects of center-based academia on global publishing and knowledge production, many other factors also play an important role in shaping MSSP's choices of topics, methodologies, and theories and thus deserve more attention, including access to training, funding, and literature, disciplinary and/or institutional privileges, competing ideologies promoted by their country and institution, and degree of academic freedom. Knowledge of these contextual issues is important to our understanding of MSSP's research and publishing experiences in both the local and global context.

The current research on MSSP's choices in research and publishing has predominantly adopted qualitative methodologies, which makes a lot of sense as these methodologies are effective in exploring individual experiences and perceptions [93]. However, since qualitative methods are interpretive in nature, researchers may be easily affected by the prior knowledge and potential assumptions that they have about the given topic, which can influence the design and conducting of their current research and thus reinforce the existing discourse and norms in the field [94]. For instance, by assuming that MSSP all have the feeling of being disadvantaged in English publishing, the researcher may intentionally look for difficulties and challenges experienced by MSSP in the research and portray these scholars as deficit. As a result, the study may enhance the stereotypes imposed on MSSP and contribute to the stigmatization of the group. Therefore, it is important that researchers actively and constantly engage in epistemic and methodological reflection on their research practices and critically examine the dominant perspectives in their discipline [94].

Additionally, no matter what methodology is used, research on MSSP's choices may benefit from triangulation of data sources and theories [95,96], which can add to its validity and reliability. Especially, as the research topic focuses on practices in the (semi-)periphery, which includes the whole Global South, it may be valuable to draw on Southern theory [97] and/or theories of de/post/neocolonialism, e.g., [98,99] that are effective in challenging the West hegemony in global knowledge production and empowering the South.

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## Appendix A

Key terms used in the search included: "multilingual", "scholars/academics", "academic publishing", "academic writing", "academic research", "topics", "theories", "methodologies", and "methods". Publications were included based on these criteria:

- The research should report empirical data.
- The research should study scholars who are bi-/multilingual and use English as an additional language.
- The research should focus on academic publishing in/from the (semi-)periphery as defined above.

Participants' race, gender, ethnicity, discipline, and title/position are not reasons for inclusion or exclusion in this review.

The search process yielded 52 studies. I conducted an initial screening and then a full-text assessment on them based on the inclusion criteria noted above to measure and determine their eligibility for inclusion in the review. Excluded were articles that:

- Are reviews or theory/discussion papers;

- Report research that studied doctoral students;
- Discuss bibliometric data only.

Due to the scarcity of research on this topic, I include all studies that explicitly address MSSP's choices of topics, methodologies, and/or theories, no matter how briefly. I also include a published dissertation that provides important information regarding the topic of the review [82]. A complete list of the 36 studies that were eventually selected and reviewed is shown in Table A1.

**Table A1.** List of the reviewed studies.

No.	Study	Location	Number of Participants	Data Sources
1	Flowerdew and Li [10]	Mainland China	20	Interviews
2	Li and Flowerdew [6]	Hong Kong	15	Interviews
3	Lillis and Curry [13]	Southern and central Europe	50	Interviews, group discussions, observations, meetings with librarians, scholars' texts and CVs, reviewers' and editors' feedback, email correspondences, institutional and historical documents
4	Curry and Lillis [40]			
5	Lillis and Curry [39]			
6	Curry and Lillis [29]			
7	Lillis and Curry [65]			
8	Feng et al. [41]	Mainland China	14	Publishing policies and interviews
9	Bardi and Muresan [50]	Romania	n/a	Survey, interviews, and published articles by the participating scholars
10	Bocanegra-Valle [42]	Around the world	161	Questionnaire
11	Dontcheva-Navratilova [51]	Czech	15	Published articles and book chapters
12	Li [66]	Mainland China	14	Interviews
13	McGrath [12]	Sweden	15	Questionnaire, interviews, and database trawl
14	Min [57]	Taiwan	38	Questionnaire
15	Schluer [44]	German	16	Interviews
16	Xu [80]	Mainland China	104	Narratives and interviews
17	Ge [22]	Mainland China	9	Interviews
18	Bell et al. [56]	India	36	Interviews and research methods textbooks
19	Luzón [19]	Spain	>14	Research websites and interviews
20	Maniati and Jalilifar [23]	Iran	15	Interviews
21	Collyer [60]	South Africa, Brazil & Australia	35	Interviews
22	Jeater [59]	Zimbabwe	n/a	Interviews and roundtable
23	Curry and Lillis [3]	Southern and central Europe	10	Interviews and the data previously collected in the PAW study (see Lillis and Curry [13])
24	Adamson et al. [54]	Japan	7	Bio profiles and autoethnographic dialogues
25	Li and Yang [58]	Mainland China	32	Interviews, journal database, and related documents
26	Luzón [20]	Spain	9	Blog posts and questionnaire
27	Soler [43]	Sweden	6	Interviews
28	Xu [55]	Mainland China	75	Institutional documents and interviews

Table A1. Cont.

No.	Study	Location	Number of Participants	Data Sources
29	Gao and Zheng [46]	Mainland China	n/a	State mass media texts and social media discussions
30	Monteiro and Hirano [4]	Brazil	290	Survey
31	Ramírez-Castañeda [16]	Colombia	49	Survey
32	Rounsaville and Zemliansky [7]	Ukraine	4	Interviews
33	Thingnes [45]	Norway	11	Policy documents, on-site observations, and interviews
34	Ward [82]	Lebanon	12	Interviews, scholars' texts and CVs, reviewer comments, faculty handbooks, world rankings of scientists, and journal metrics
35	Xu [61]	Mainland China	65	Interviews
36	Heng et al. [81]	Cambodia	20	Interviews

Initial coding first located the part(s) of each article where one or more of the following topics are discussed: (1) the topics researched by MSSP; (2) the methodologies and/or theories used in MSSP's research; (3) the reasons and rationales given by MSSP for these choices they made; and (4) the constraints experienced by MSSP in researching and publishing about their topics and/or their use of methodologies and theories; and these were then coded line by line to remain open to all possibilities.

Next, axial coding based on the codes generated during the first round of coding was undertaken, aiming to make connections between the codes and generate initial themes [100]. More specifically, codes that were repeatedly seen, such as "institutional requirements/policies", "impact factor", "English/international journals", "local issues", "social contributions", "different paradigms/discourse", "(research) interests", "knowledge production", and so forth. Then similarities between these relatively high-frequency codes and the others were sought, as were patterns among all the codes. According to the identified similarities and patterns, codes were grouped into larger categories, that is, the initial themes emerging from the data [101], including "staying in local academia", "going global", "pursuing personal/research interests", "desire for recognition/reputation", "giving back to the country/society", "contributing to knowledge production", "having difficulty understanding/responding to reviewers' feedback", "constraints in the local context", "complying with publishing policies", "following institutional requirements/evaluation on scholars", "lacking access to resources", and "others", which consisted of codes that could not fit perfectly into any of the themes generated at that time. Finally, during the selective coding process, the initial themes were reviewed, merging similar/related ones and checking if all themes had sufficient supportive data in the literature [44]. At this stage, it was found that the themes and codes could be further categorized into two central groups: the motivating factors of MSSP's choices and the mediating factors of their choices, with several subthemes under each group.

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