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International Publication in the Field of Legal Science in Vietnam: Achievements, Shortcomings, and Lessons Learnt

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Abstract:

Publishing research in international science journals (hereinafter referred to as international publication) increasingly plays an important role in globalization and the international integration of countries worldwide. Currently, there is no official research on the status of international publications in the field of legal science in Vietnam. Therefore, we have conducted a study on this issue based on statistics and analysis of internationally published data in this field in Vietnam, focusing on the past two decades from Scopus data sources. The result indicates that the field of legal science in Vietnam faces many difficulties in international publication due to different factors, mainly domestic ones. However, with joint efforts, it has shown signs of overcoming barriers to enter international integration, but once again facing difficult prospects. This article has highlighted lessons learned for promoting international publication activities in legal science globally.

Keywords: international publication, legal science, Vietnam.

越南法律科学领域的国际出版物：成就、不足和经验教训

摘要：

在国际科学期刊上发表研究成果（以下简称国际出版物）在全球化和世界各国的国际一体化进程中发挥着越来越重要的作用。目前，还没有关于越南法学领域国际出版物状况的官方研究。因此，我们基于对越南这一领域的国际公开数据的统计和分析，对这一问题进行了研究，重点是来自斯科普斯数据源的过去二十

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年。结果表明，由于各种因素，主要是国内因素，越南法学领域在国际出版方面面临许多困难。然而，在共同努力下，中国虽有冲破障碍融入国际的迹象，但又一次面临艰难的前景。本文重点介绍了在全球范围内促进法学国际出版活动的经验教训。

关键词：国际出版物，法律科学，越南。

1. Introduction

Today, scientific research is recognized worldwide as a guideline for the existence and development of human society; therefore, international publication is considered the top goal of all scientific disciplines to contribute to their knowledge and promote the successful development of human civilization (Griu, 2016). Affirming the fundamental role of science is a long journey and a giant leap for mankind in the process of developing and obtaining knowledge. Accordingly, during the development of human society, the interpretation of natural and social phenomena is mainly based on two bases: science and religion (Cragun, 2015). However, thanks to the Scientific Revolution in the 16th-century, science came to assert its dominant role. Specifically, philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626) emphasized: “*Science, not religion, was regarded increasingly as the key to knowledge from the 16th century onward*” (Bacon, 2000). On this basis, scientific research becomes an urgent mission of mankind and a prerequisite for promoting the abundance of research works published at the international level later.

International publications, regardless of any field, have certain contributions to the socio-economic development of the world as a whole and each country in particular. Former US President George H. W. Bush asserted: “*Science, by itself, provides no panacea for individual, social, and economic ills... But without scientific progress, no achievement in other directions can insure our health, prosperity, and security as a nation in the modern world*” (Richter, 1995). According to Tuan (2015), although there is no binding international publication in terms of ethics, it is an obligation of a genuine researcher for the existence and development of humanity. In fact, an influential study, if not widely published, may have many undesirable consequences. For instance, studies related to the COVID-19 pandemic, if not published internationally, will result in a lack of information, thereby limiting the ability of countries to prevent and control the epidemic, causing many unpredictable consequences.

In addition to their contributions to the common development of human and ethical obligations, the results of international publications prove scientists’ expertise, strengthening their career paths. Moreover, these results are used as a fundamental criterion for determining global educational institution rankings, thereby reflecting the quality of an education system and affirming a country’s position in international-level education. For example, the results of international publications are the basis for commenting and awarding

international awards to recognize the value and contributions of scientists (such as Nobel, Humboldt, Abel, Shaw, and so on). Meanwhile, in Vietnam, international publication is also a criterion to confer noble titles of a scientist’s research career, namely “Professor” and “Associate Professor”. International publication is a mandatory condition to be considered for these titles, which is specified in Articles 5 and 6 of the Decision No. 37/2018/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister, adopted August 31, 2018 on promulgating “The standards and procedures for consideration of recognition and appointment to professor or associate professor titles; procedures for cancelation of recognition and removal of professor or associate professor titles”, amended and supplemented in 2020 by Decision No. 25/2020/QĐ-TTg adopted August 31, 2020 of the Prime Minister (Government of Vietnam, 2018). Another example is that when evaluating the educational quality ranking of global universities, the scientific research index is the leading criterion (mainly based on ISI and Scopus publications). Although this assessment has sometimes been criticized for using data from only one database source (Thomson Reuters), it leads to a lack of objectivity in the results, typically excluding publications not published in English (Wächter et al., 2015). Thus, as being analyzed above, it can be affirmed that international publication is an indispensable and objective requirement in all fields of science as a whole and legal science in particular; this is the intrinsic motivation to promote the efforts of scientists as well as educational institutions, thereby directly or indirectly bringing common benefits to the whole society.

2. Methods and Methodologies

This research is conducted from a dialectical-historical perspective and employs a dialectical-historical approach to gain insights into factors affecting the results of international publications in Vietnam. Therefore, dialectical and historical materialist methodologies will be the two main methodologies of this study. On that basis, this study applies two methods: dialectical materialism and historical materialism. The flowchart is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. The research process flow chart

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Current Status of International Publication in the Field of Legal Science in Vietnam

In Vietnam, the number of international publications in social science is generally much lower than that in natural science. Specifically, according to Tuan (2016), the proportion of international publications in the social science field in Vietnam only represented 8% of the total number of international publications in all fields, particularly economics occupied 4%. Thus, excluding economics, from 2001 to 2015, the total proportion of international publications of the remaining social

science in Vietnam (including law) only made up 4%. Other related research, however, has shown that the low number of international publications in social science compared to natural science is a common situation in ASEAN countries (Lan, 2019).

According to Hai and Diep (2021), law is a social science discipline recognized by Vietnamese academics as very harsh in international academic publishing and only experienced by well-known researchers. This assessment almost accurately reflects the status of international publications in the field of legal science in Vietnam, especially in the period from 2017 and earlier (Table 1).

Table 1. Statistics on the number of international legal publications in Vietnam from 1996 to 2021 (The authors' compilation from SCIMAGO databases)

Years	Number of publications	Years	Number of publications
1996-2000	1	2011	6
2001	2	2012	6
2002	1	2013	7
2003	2	2014	8
2004	2	2015	10
2005	2	2016	29
2006	0	2017	11
2007	5	2018	30
2008	2	2019	47
2009	4	2020	80
2010	8	2021	104
Total			367

Another typical example is that there were very few international articles in the scientific records of doctors of the law who applied for the approval of Associate Professor to the State Council for the Title of Professor during this period (Chau & An, 2018). So, the question is whether international publication in the legal profession is really "difficult" globally or just in Vietnam?

According to Christián (2022), the most recent research results on the development trend of global legal journals over the past 20 years have shown that the number of international publications in the field of legal science is "dominated" by English-speaking countries, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom (see Table II). Until 2021, the number of law journals in the Scopus catalog had reached 790 (SJR, 2021a). This number is even higher than the Scopus journals in economics, namely 693 (SJR, 2021b). Accordingly, if only counting the number of journals originating from English-speaking countries, it reached over 436/790 journals (the United States – 185 journals; the United Kingdom – 228 journals; Australia – 12 journals; and Canada – 11 journals). However, this does not mean that it is difficult for countries where English is not the official language to participate in international publications in the field of legal science since. Non-Native English-speaking countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and China still have much international publications and are ranked in top positions in the global rankings (Table 2).

Table 2. The top 10 leading countries' number of international legal publications (The authors' compilation from SCIMAGO databases)

No.	Countries	Number of publications
1	United States	119246
2	United Kingdom	49451
3	Australia	19424
4	Germany	16677
5	Canada	15269
6	Italy	11729
7	Netherlands	11368
8	Spain	10985
9	China	10619
10	France	9427

Even though China, a country belonging to the socialist system, not using English as the official language, is still one of the countries having the most noticeable results of international publication in law, with 10619 articles (SJR, 2021c). Especially in the years 2020 and 2021, this country's international publication figures were 1330 articles, ranked 7th globally (SJR, 2020) and 1374 articles, ranked 5th globally (SJR, 2021d), respectively. The aforementioned arguments show that international publication in the field of legal science on a global scale is not truly as difficult as in the case of Vietnam. Those countries not using English as the official language still achieved high results in international publications. At the same time, it can be affirmed that political regime is not the most important factor deciding the productivity of a country's international publication.

In addition, according to SJR (2020) statistics Vietnam has 367 articles, ranked 60th globally.

Compared to the remaining 10 Southeast Asian countries, the total number of articles of Vietnam is at the average level, ranked 5th after Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand (Figure 2).

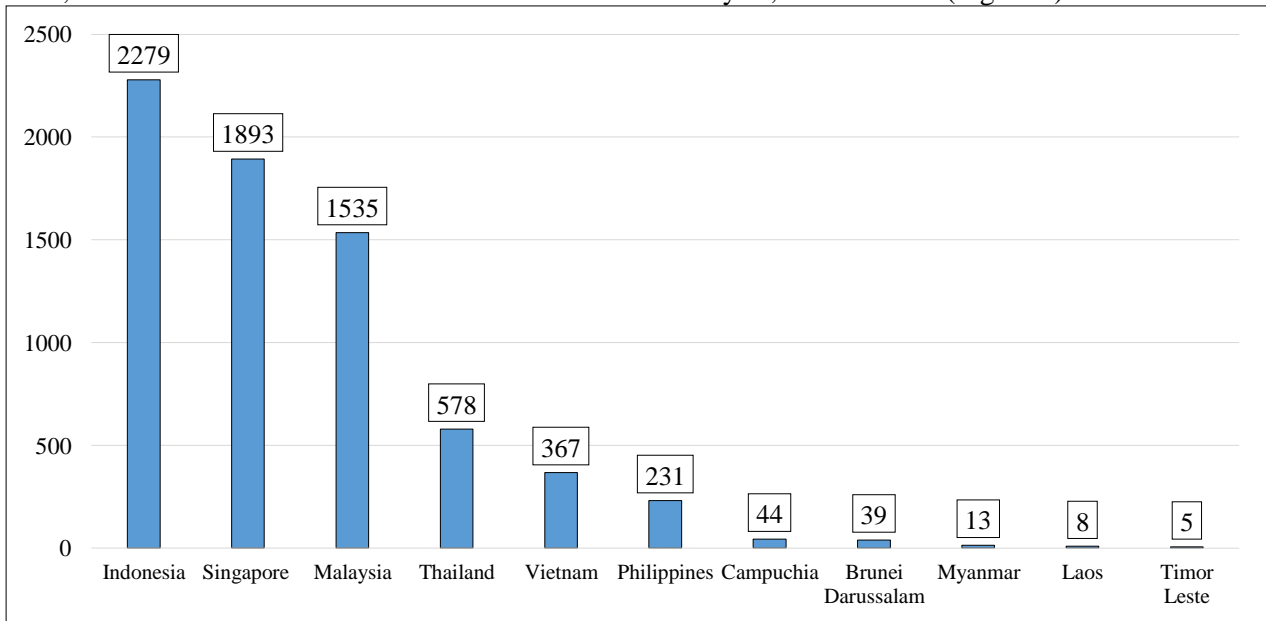


Figure 2. Comparing the Southeast Asian countries' total number of international legal publications (The authors' compilation from SCIMAGO databases)

In summary, besides the objective barrier of a foreign language, particularly English, there are difficulties in international publication activities in the field of legal science in Vietnam mainly caused by subjective factors in the legal sector. In other words, the specific factors of legal science in Vietnam that in general, there have been four main factors that hinder the international publishing activities of the legal sector in Vietnam, including:

- First, ideology, awareness, and international cooperation.
- Second, policies and laws.
- Third, the theoretical basis of legal science and the right to academic freedom.
- Finally, scientific database systems and the right to access information.

3.2. Main Factors Affecting International Publication in the Field of Legal Science in Vietnam

3.2.1. On Ideology, Awareness and International Cooperation: Consequences of the Embargo Period and Positive Changes

Until now, many scientists in the field of social science in Vietnam still assume that it is not necessary to have international articles (Thuan, 2019). Some even believe that social science branches in Vietnam could not integrate into the world (Tung et al., 2017) because there is still a big academic gap for social scientists in Vietnam to publish their research internationally (Bac, 2021). Therefore, instead of focusing on international publications, it is better to focus on salary reform and research evaluation system, which has been mentioned many times in Vietnam. The main cause for this situation mainly comes from the social context in Vietnam, which is influenced by the Western countries'

embargoes and the closure policy of the Vietnamese Government in the period from 1975 to 1990 (Thuan, 2019). Accordingly, being isolated has led to certain difficulties in research activities and international cooperation and gradually formed a mindset of limited access, aloofness, and not caring about the importance of international publication activities of domestic academic circles.

Consequently, due to the lack of cooperation with the international scientific community, the theoretical basis of social science branches in Vietnam has gradually become obsolete, leaving an academic void called "a big academic gap" Among the social science branches, Vietnamese legal science is one of the most heavily affected as the field has characteristics of the legal system and political regime of Socialism. In fact, during embargoed (1975-1990), legal scientists in Vietnam were mainly sent to study in countries belonging to the socialist system (the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe), and thus were deeply influenced by the Cold War between the capitalist and socialist countries (Thuan, 2019). This has led to more and more difficulties for legal scientists in Vietnam to attend to international cooperation and publication plans, especially with well-developed educational systems such as the United States and other Western countries. It is worth noting that lessons learned from countries holding leading positions of international publication in the field of legal science, especially countries not speaking English as an official language (such as Germany, France, Italy, China, and India), points out one thing in common, which is law scientists and legal, educational institutions in those nations have a very high level of international cooperation, especially having a close connection with Western countries like the United States and the United Kingdom (Christián et

al., 2022).

However, related research shows that Vietnamese scientists have been more inclined to cooperate with Western countries since the normalization of relations than Russian scientists. This is proven by the results of international publications from 2001 to 2015, particularly the numbers of international publications in the form of cooperation between scientists in Vietnam and other countries in this period are as follows: the USA (2,416 articles), Japan (2,283 articles), Korea (1,955 articles), France (1,887 articles), Germany (1,321 articles), the Netherlands (913 articles), and Russia (711 articles) (Tuan, 2016). This part indicates the change in ideology and awareness of Vietnamese scientists related to research cooperation and international publishing. In addition, statistics on the rate of citations for international publication in the period 2001 - 2015 show that while the citation index of articles published by Vietnamese and foreign authors in the field of natural science was higher than that of pure Vietnamese authors, the field of social science witnessed an opposite trend, whereby the citation index of articles published by pure Vietnamese authors was higher than that of articles published through international cooperation (Tuan, 2016). This also demonstrates the value of international publication in the field of social sciences in Vietnam to the world, thereby showing the prospect of international integration of social science in Vietnam, including legal science.

On the other hand, compared to other social science branches (such as politics, language, history, culture, etc.), law can be considered a field with very high prospects for international publication (Lan, 2019). In essence, law is a framework for dealing with problems in society, which are common and verified in the process of practical application on a large scale (countries/regions). Therefore, from a scientific perspective, national laws are essentially research works linking theory to practice with high reliability. Also, it is necessary to acknowledge that no matter how advanced the legal system is, learning from each other among legal systems is an objective necessity. In fact, countries worldwide are learning and borrowing from each other to reform their national laws to promote socio-economic development (Rubin, 2007). Thus, to remove barriers to international publication Vietnamese legal scientists need to change their conception and realize the importance of international publication to society as a whole and themselves in particular. In addition, the government and educational institutions also need regulations and mechanisms to encourage and motivate law researchers in international publication activities.

3.2.2. On Policies and Laws: From a Positive Prospect to a Negative One?

After ideology and awareness, policies and laws play an equally important role in creating motivation for international publication activities. This is evidenced by

practice in Vietnam, specifically through the policies and laws of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Government in dealing with international issues since the normalization of relations with the Western countries, proven by the following periods:

Firstly, from 1992 to 2000, the urgent goal of the Vietnamese Communist Party in international affairs was the resumption and consolidation of international relations. According to the Documents of the 7th CPV Congress (1991-1995) and the 8th CPV Congress (1996-2000) of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Accordingly, Article 14 of Vietnam's 1992 Constitution states: *"The Socialist Republic of Vietnam performs a policy of peace and friendship, seeks to expand its relations and cooperation with all countries in the world, regardless of the political and social regime, based on respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, and mutual interest; it seeks to strengthen solidarity, friendship and cooperation with the socialist countries and neighboring countries; it actively supports and participates in the common struggle of the peoples of the world for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress"* (Viet Nam's Constitution, 1992). This shows that, on the one hand, Vietnam is open to exchanges and cooperation with all countries in the world, regardless of different political and social regimes, but on the other hand, it is still cautious about strengthening solidarity, friendship, and cooperative relations with socialist countries and neighboring countries in the early stage of the opening period. Consequently, it was impossible to find a formal legal document enacted during this period that encouraged international research and publication. Therefore, during this period, the field of legal science in Vietnam had very few international publications, and Scimago only counted one publication in 1997 (SJR, 1997).

Second, from 2001 to 2012, after the issue of international relations was settled, the Vietnamese Communist Party had shifted its focus to international integration in terms of economics. According to the Documents of the 9th CPV Congress (2001 - 2005) and the 10th CPV Congress (2006 - 2010) of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Accordingly, Articles 15 and 16 of Resolution No. 51/2001/QH10 adopted December 25, 2001 (Government of Viet Nam, 2001) by the National Assembly on "Amending and supplementing several articles of the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992" affirmed: *"The State builds an independent and self-reliant economy based on promoting internal resources and actively integrating into the international economy; perform industrialization and modernization of the country. The State's economic policy aims to make the people rich and the country strong, to better meet the people's material and spiritual needs by releasing all productive potential, developing all latent possibilities of components of the economy"* (Viet Nam's Constitution, 1992). This explains why the results of the international

publication of the remaining social sciences in Vietnam (including law) in this period accounted for a very low percentage. In contrast, economics occupied a high proportion, 4%, as mentioned above.

During this period, the Vietnamese Government also started to develop regulations promoting scientific research, and the international publication, specifically the promulgation of the Law on Science and Technology, officially took effect on January 1, 2001. On this basis, legal documents on strategic planning, support and encouragement of scientific research activities and international publication have also been composed and enacted, typically the Prime Minister's Decision No. 272/2003/QĐ-TTg adopted December 31, 2003, promulgating "The approval of the strategy on Vietnam's scientific and technological development till 2010" (Government of Viet Nam, 2003a). Besides, projects on training high-quality human resources in developed countries have also begun to be widely applied, typically "The project on training scientific and technical cadres at foreign establishments with the state budget" promulgated under the Prime Minister's Decision No. 322/2000/QĐ-TTg adopted April 19, 2000 (Government of Viet Nam, 2000). Accordingly, when Vietnamese scientists (especially PhD candidates) participate in training at overseas educational institutions, they need to meet international publication conditions for their dissertation defense in the host country (Fry et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the highlight of this period was the Vietnamese Government's Decree No. 122/2003/ND-CP adopted on October 22, 2003, which promulgated the setting up of the National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (Nafosted fund), which has been in operation since 2008 (Government of Viet Nam, 2003b). Accordingly, Article 1 of Decree No. 122/2003/ND-CP states: The National Fund for Science and Technology Development (Nafosted) is a non-profit operating fund with the function of funding and lending to perform scientific and technological tasks proposed by organizations and individuals (Government of Viet Nam, 2003). Accordingly, the Nafosted fund finances scientific research activities in all fields, but they have to meet the condition of being published in prestigious international journals such as ISI/Scopus to receive a grant. The field of legal science has also received funding from the Nafosted fund; however, in reality, due to the limitation of funding sources, many legal science topics did not receive grants from this fund (Nafosted, 2022).

In general, although there was no huge benefit, it can be seen that the policies and laws enacted during this period have brought a positive effect on the results of international publications in the field of legal science in Vietnam. Since the operation of the Nafosted fund, the number of international legal publications in Vietnam has increased markedly compared to the previous period (see Table I).

Finally, in the period from 2013 to the present, Article 12 of the 2013 Constitution of Vietnam has aimed to achieve the goal of multilateralizing and diversifying diplomatic relations, namely: "*The Socialist Republic of Vietnam consistently carries out a diplomatic policy of independence, autonomy, peace, friendship, cooperation and development; seeks multilateral and diversified relations and actively seeks international integration and cooperation based on respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual interest; conforms to the Charter of the United Nations and international treaties in which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a member; a friend, reliable partner and responsible member in the international community for the sake of national interests and contributes to the cause of peace, national independence, democracy and social progress in the world*" (Viet Nam's Constitution, 2013). Since 2016, the Communist Party of Vietnam has shifted its core goal to comprehensive international integration. According to the Documents of the 12th CPV's Congress (2016 – 2020) and the 13th CPV's Congress (2021 – 2025) of the Communist Party of Vietnam. From this period, all scientific fields have pursued the goal of international integration, in which international publication is one of the fundamental bases to concretize the implementation of this goal. A typical example is that in this period, for the first time, Vietnamese law stipulates that international publication is a "mandatory" condition for doctoral programs by the Ministry of Education and Training's Circular No. 08/2017/TT-BGDĐT adopted April 4, 2017 promulgating "The regulations on doctoral program admission and doctoral education" (Ministry of Education, 2017), which officially took effect on May 20, 2018. Accordingly, Articles 11 and 16 of this Circular require both doctoral supervisors and PhD candidates to have international publications directly related to the PhD candidates' topic to be able to supervise (for supervisors) and defend the doctoral thesis (for PhD candidates). As a result, the international publication productivity of scientific disciplines in Vietnam has increased significantly, whereby related research has pointed out that the number of international publications in all fields, according to Scopus statistics in 2020, has increased 3.5 times compared to that of 2016, while the average annual growth rate of international publication is 37.85% (Hai et al., 2021). In particular, statistics also showed that the number of international publications of social science in this period has almost completely "dominated" the total number of international publications so far in Vietnam (see Figure 3), especially since the field of legal science has begun to break through the barriers and has had a sudden increase in the number of international articles (see Figure 4).

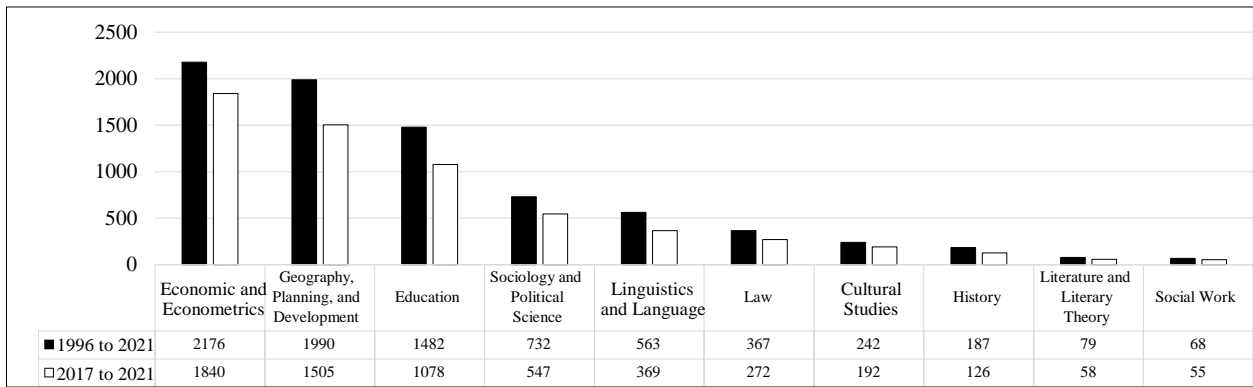


Figure 3. The number of international publications of social science branches in Vietnam between the periods of 1996 to 2021 and 2017 to 2021 (The authors' compilation from SCIMAGO databases)

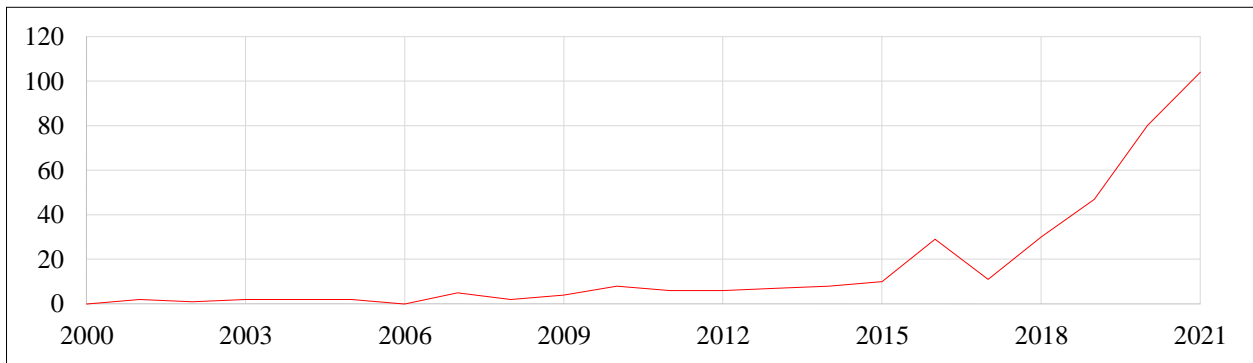


Figure 4. The growth rate of international legal publications in Vietnam from 2000 to 2021 (The authors' compilation from SCIMAGO databases)

Therefore, if Decree No. 122/2003/ND-CP is considered to promote scientific research and international publication in Vietnam, the regulations of Circular No. 08/2017/TT-BGDĐT can be confirmed as a radical measure, creating a turning point marking the comprehensive international integration of all science branches in Vietnam, including legal science.

However, according to the latest regulations on doctoral enrollment and training, the mechanism of Circular 08/2017/TT-BGDĐT is no longer applied. Instead, the Government has returned to apply the previous mechanism (from 2017 and earlier). Specifically, Circular No. 18/2021/TT-BGDĐT adopted on June 28, 2021, by the Ministry of Education and Training on promulgating “The regulations on doctoral program admission and doctoral education” (Ministry of Education, 2021). Accordingly, Articles 5 and 14 of this Circular no longer stipulate international publication as the mandatory condition for doctoral training. This has aroused the concern of the scientific community in Vietnam about the number of international publications in Vietnam. Thus, if the legal scientists themselves do not realize the important role of international publication, the results of international publication in the field of legal science in Vietnam will likely face the negative prospect as before. Despite this, the criteria for conferring the titles of “Professor” and “Associate Professor” still maintain the condition of international publication as a necessary condition for candidates. Specifically, according to Point b, Clause 4, Article 5 and Point b, Clause 4, Article 6 of the Decision No.37/2018/QĐ-TTg (Government of Viet

Nam, 2018) candidates applying for the title of Professor must have at least 5 international publications in their scientific records (international publications, in this case, include articles, book chapters published by prestigious journals and publishers in the world); meanwhile, the condition required for the title of Associate Professor is at least 3.

As can be seen, policies and laws play key roles in promoting the international publishing activities of all science branches in general, as well as health science in particular. With the results achieved from the mechanism of Circular 08/2017/TT-BGDĐT, the Vietnamese Government should consider maintaining this mechanism to create a premise to promote international publishing activities in the future thereby contributing to the core goal of comprehensive international integration.

3.2.3. On the Theoretical Basis of Legal Science and the Right to Academic Freedom: Academic Void Unfilled?

To clarify a scientific problem, the scientific foundation is the key factor determining the success and reliability of the research results. More importantly, scientific foundations must be built through the inheritance of widely accepted and summarized views, arguments, and ideas. If this condition is not satisfied, it is impossible for the conclusions and judgments of the research to be reliable. For example, the research (Faraldo-Cabana & Lamela, 2021) on internationalization in the criminology and criminal justice field also mentioned concerns about the universality of scientific foundations at the international

level. In the field of legal science, legal theory or legal doctrine (in the future referred to as legal theory) is recognized by the scientific community as the common currency of legal science (Tiller & Cross, 2006). Accordingly, “currency” in this case can be understood as arguments and scientific foundations widely recognized and applied globally. Therefore, for a scientific, legal study to be accepted by international journals (especially in prestigious journals such as ISI/Scopus), it has to be based on the foundation of legal theories.

Nevertheless, as mentioned before, because of the consequences of the embargo period and the closure policy in the period 1975 to 1990, the problem that legal science in Vietnam is facing is the lack of attention to basic legal theories and the absence of specialized legal theories in both education and scientific research. In addition, due to the specificity of the political regime in Vietnam, which is based on the inheritance of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the study of lawmaking in Vietnam is mainly based on the methodology of this doctrine. This is always recognized in Constitution’s Article 4 (Vietnam’s Constitution, 1980; Vietnam’s Constitution, 1992; Vietnam’s Constitution, 2013). However, from a scientific perspective, Marxist-Leninist ideology is a political-economic theory, not a legal theory. This almost has created certain difficulties to the scientific methodology of legal study in Vietnam, especially when approaching international research and publication activities, where multidimensional approaches are encouraged. A typical example is when clarifying the theoretical basis of a domestic article, the common approach of Vietnamese legal scientists is to analyze the contents of the research object’s concept, characteristics, roles, and nature in which the clarification of these contents is largely based on domestic documents and domestic scientific opinions, along with the assessment and conclusion of the article’s author. Meanwhile, the requirement to approach the theoretical basis of international articles is to base on specialized legal theories or other scientific theories directly related to the research object, as this helps to clarify the origin of formation, development, and reason for the existence of legal regulations. Then, there is a combination of contemporary scientific views as a basis for the author to come up with the core scientific conclusions of the research object with high reliability, thereby minimizing the author’s subjective assessments (Tiller & Cross, 2006).

From a scientific perspective, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between inheriting advances from basic and specialized legal theories and issues related to political regimes. In fact, Vietnamese law has inherited many scientific viewpoints from legal systems around the world. For instance, the 2015 Vietnamese Civil Code was composed based on learning and inheriting legal theories and scientific viewpoints used to compose the Civil Code of the French Republic. On the other hand, although it has been more than 30 years of

building a socialist-oriented market economy, up to now, the Vietnamese Communist Party still admits that this new economic model is not being understood thoroughly enough; hence, the mission in the future is to continue building and perfecting the theoretical basis for this model. According to Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW adopted June 3, 2017, of the Fifth Conference of the 12th CPV’s Congress on “Improving the socialist-oriented market economy” (Government of Viet Nam, 2017a). This is completely consistent with the situation of Vietnam because the transition from socialism to communism is a long process, and there has not been any country belonging to the socialist system that has really succeeded from which Vietnam can learn and inherit comprehensively so far. While other remaining Socialist countries (such as China, North Korea, Laos, and Cuba) also have different approaches to pursuing socialism, the prerequisite must flexibly apply Marxism’s laws to avoid following the path of the Soviet Union. Thus, from the basis of the law of movement and development, it can be affirmed that the collection, research, and selective inheritance of basic and specialized legal scientific theories all over the world in order to perfect a country’s legal system is an indispensable and objective requirement, thereby creating a premise for current and future law scientists in Vietnam to be able to conduct in-depth research, promote scientific research, and publish internationally.

Through studying the curriculums on legal training programs of most educational institutions in Vietnam, the authors found that the vast majority of universities in Vietnam currently do not have the “basic theories of law” course in the Bachelor’s Programs as well as the “specialized theories of law” course in the Master’s and Doctoral Programs. Even at the remaining training institutions, the basic theories of law are only included in the “elective” courses; typically, less than 10% of all 91 law training institutions in Vietnam have taught this course. Meanwhile, in other countries, instructing legal theories is considered to be indispensable in the law training program, especially specialized legal theories, because it supports law students in all aspects from theoretical thinking to the practical working process (Coleman, 1995). Even one of the leading experts of modern jurisprudence, Jules Coleman asserted:

“Legal theory is essential to legal education. Without it, law schools cannot train successful lawyers who can usefully advise their clients and successfully influence judges and other officials... Legal theory is not only an integral component of the modern law school curriculum, it is an important and valuable component as well. We can distinguish between instrumental and intrinsic value. Legal theory is instrumentally valuable insofar as it contributes to better lawyering. Legal theory is intrinsically valuable in so far as it is essential to one’s understanding of law as a field of study and as a social practice” (Coleman, 1995). A typical example is that China has included the legal theory module in the bachelor of law training

program named Basic Theory of Law according to Tay and Kamenka (1986), which includes reforming the former Soviet Union's legal theories as per Keyuan (2003) and inheriting the Western legal theories (Minzner, 2013). Thus, it can be seen that the results of China's international publication in the field of legal science have been significantly contributed by teaching legal theory in the law school curriculum.

Of course, it should also be added that the basic legal theory itself (for Bachelor's program) or specialized legal theory (for Master's and Doctoral programs) cannot alone decide the quality of training and the productivity of international publication. What learners should build in the long term is legal thinking based on the step-by-step development of this "science of thinking". This requires training at the high school level and earlier must aim to develop "thinking capacity" based on the perception that Thinking Science is an independent science compared to Natural Science and Social Science. Natural and social science knowledge is equally important, but without a coherent and synchronous thinking system, they are just fragments of knowledge. Hence, acquiring, building, and strengthening Thinking Science in training programs at all levels of education is extremely important not only for scientific research capacity but also for problem solving ability of learners.

Currently, one of the most difficulties is that Vietnamese law has not yet officially recognized the right to academic freedom as a fundamental right, therefore, law scientists in Vietnam do not have a solid basis to research and instruct legal theories, especially Western legal theories. Accordingly, because of the political regime, legal scientists in Vietnam are very sensitive when mentioning the spiritual and philosophical inheritance from Western legal science theories, for instance, the separation of powers and civil society of the capitalist regime.

In fact, the right to freedom (including academic freedom) in any country still has certain limitations, the first of which is related to issues of political security, whereby this limitation is not considered to violate the essence of rights to freedom (Stachowiak-Kudła, 2021). Moreover, related research has shown that the right to academic freedom has been regulated in the constitutions of 72 countries around the world, including China (Dat, 2020). Therefore, to create a premise to promote international research and publication in the field of legal science in Vietnam and other countries around the world, the recognition of the right to academic freedom in education is an indispensable and objective requirement. However, in the case of Vietnam, this right is of the limitations that: *"Being not used for the purpose of propagandizing against the laws and policies of the Vietnamese Communist Party and Government, causing harm to the fine customs, cultural life and spirit of the society and its people, refuting or denying Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, the principle of democratic centralism, socialist democracy, the socialist rule of*

law state, the socialist-oriented market economy, demanding socialist powers, civil society, pluralism and multi-party". According to Clause 4, Article 19 of Vietnam's 2008 Law on Cadres and Civil Servants, adopted November 13, 2008, amended and supplemented in 2019 by Law No. 52/2019/QH14 of the National Assembly adopted November 25, 2019 (Government of Viet Nam, 2019); Point b, Clause 3, Article 7 of Regulation No. 102-QD-TW adopted November 15, 2017 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam on "Disciplinary measures against Party members committing violations" (Government of Viet Nam, 2017b).

3.2.4. On the Scientific Database System and the Right of Access to Information: Shortcomings Should Be Solved

The remaining factor hindering the international publication of the law sector in Vietnam is the limited development of the domestic scientific database system. Meanwhile, Western countries and international organizations have synchronous database systems, ensuring openness, transparency, and accessibility. Furthermore, these database systems do not stop giving mere numbers but also statistics on specific data directly related to the research object. For example, for projects implemented from a given period, databases cannot only record the total number of projects implemented but, more importantly, evaluate the socioeconomic effectiveness of those projects. Correspondingly, how much profit or loss in the economic aspect and the advantages and disadvantages in the social aspect can also be shown by specific numbers or percentages such as the World Bank's Implementation Completion and Results Report (ICR), the IFC's Expanded Project Supervision Report (XPSR) and Project Completion Report (PCR), MIGA's Project Evaluation Report (PER), etc. (WB, 2019). Another example is that when writing this article, the authors conveniently found data on the number of international publications in Vietnam and other countries around the world through Scimago's database system. On the contrary, there is no database having statistics on the number of international publications of Vietnamese law training institutions found from domestic databases. Hence, with the developed and synchronous database system, Western countries are able to approach research objects and solve problems through quantitative thinking inherited from the development of the natural sciences. While the database system in Vietnam, typically in the field of legal science, cannot guaranty the quality of data, legal scientists reluctantly have to deal with problems through qualitative thinking, leading to failure in pursuing the reliability requirements of international journals.

In addition, the mechanism ensuring the right of access to information in Vietnam still has inadequacies in practice. Accordingly, scientists in Vietnam always have to face confidential, secret, top-secret information or even information unqualified for secrecy but still

sealed as secret information. Nevertheless, the 2016 Law on Access to Information has not had a good mechanism to handle this case (Hien & Thang, 2021).

On the other hand, related research has also shown that academic literature in law concerning the internationality of academic legal research is relatively “scarce” compared to other social science fields such as geography, information science, international relations, or psychology (Christián et al., 2022). This leads to more difficulties for Vietnamese legal scientists in accessing scientific documents for conducting and publishing their research internationally. Furthermore, related research in 2021 has also pointed out that if lecturers at universities in Vietnam have the conditions to access reference materials, they will have an average of 4 times higher international publication productivity than those not having the conditions to access reference documents (Thao et al., 2021). Thus, this has proven the importance of reference sources to international publication results of all scientific disciplines of countries worldwide and Vietnam in particular.

Moreover, the field of science in Vietnam faces the painful problem of “dishonesty, plagiarism” in conducting scientific research, including legal science. Although some educational institutions currently have also applied anti-plagiarism software, to a certain extent, this software can only check documents publicly available online (or granted access rights). Therefore, there should be a connection between legal, educational institutions and legal research institutes to build a common database system to share research works, thesis, and dissertations, thereby promoting fair and equal opportunities and protecting intellectual property rights for jurisprudence researchers in Vietnam.

4. Conclusion

Internationalization is an effective solution for all countries to integrate into the world comprehensively. Through analyzing the current status of international publications in the field of legal science in Vietnam, this study draws five main findings as follows:

First, the political regime is not a deciding factor in the productivity of a country’s international publication, but it has a great influence on this activity.

Second, English is an objective barrier significantly affecting the results of international publications for countries not speaking English as an official language. However, besides improving legal researchers’ English ability, international experience shows that countries solve this problem by strengthening and promoting international cooperation in the field of legal science, especially with English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. More importantly, it is noteworthy that promoting international cooperation is closely related to the awareness of legal scientists about the importance of international publication.

Third, laws and policies are the key measures directly determining the productivity of international

publication in all science branches in general and legal science in particular. Therefore, to promote the productivity of international publication in the law sector, it is necessary to have a “thorough” mechanism for training human resources, especially at the doctoral level.

Fourth, legal, scientific theories play a crucial role in the training of human resources for the law sector, especially since they are the foundation that the legal, scientific community at the international level approaches and recognizes for scientific arguments. This issue is directly related to recognizing the right to academic freedom in a country’s legal system. Looking from a multidimensional perspective, this right also facilitates legal scientists from different political systems worldwide to study and inherit advances in legal theories of humanity, thereby promoting the cohesion of the global scientific community.

Finally, the scientific database and the right of access to information play an equally important role in facilitating legal scientists to access, research, and publish their research internationally. Accordingly, ensuring a modern, synchronous, and transparent database system is necessary. The linking and sharing of legal documents between educational institutions and research institutes is a prerequisite to creating fair and equal opportunities for legal scientists in international research and publication activities.

Compared to other countries, Vietnam has lagged considerably in legal science publications. The former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe theories greatly influence Vietnamese publications in legal science. Moreover, compared to international publications from countries such as the US and Germany, Vietnam has a ground to cover to bridge the 'big academic gap' that arose from the years of the embargo (1975-1990).

The research has established that the political regime in a country influences international publication. As such, Vietnam's government and its policymakers should create a conducive political environment that would support international publication. On the other hand, concerted efforts should be made to enhance international cooperation in the field of legal science publication. This cooperation should focus on English-speaking countries and countries that use English as their official language. Policymakers should also express policies that enhance legal theory as a foundation for training human resources. Further, they should ensure the availability of information that would enable legal scientists to publish their work internationally.

5. Limitations and Future Research

The limitation of this study is the fact that it was conducted only based on Scopus data sources. Therefore, further studies can be conducted using other reliable database sources, particularly the Web of Science.

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