A SIX STEP MODEL FOR SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES: FADAPA

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Abstract

Only a few out of thousands of social research each year become really successful. Most of them are either not appreciated or forgotten in a short period of time. The primary purpose of this study is to compile and emphasize the fundamental requirements of a successful social research. It proposes six "rules of thumb" and introduces a model coined as FADAPA to correspond the initial of each single rule. FADAPA proposes the selection of an interesting topic and the comprehensive analysis of the topic as the first two requirements. Development of simple and preferably visual model followed by a broad application is advised as the following two requirements. Publishing the developed model and the empirical results is introduced as the next step of successful research. Finally, advertisement and diffusion of the model among scholars, academicians and business people is presented as the last requirement which should be fulfilled by the researchers who aim to be notable in the literature. To prove the validity of the proposed model, the author also evaluate three well-known theories (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, and Porter's Five Forces Model) from the perspectives of FADAPA rules.

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SOSYAL BİLİMLERDE BAŞARILI BİR ARAŞTIRMA İÇİN ALTI BASAMAKLI BİR MODEL: FADAPA

Özetçe

Her yıl sosyal bilimlerdeki binlerce araştırmadan sadece birkaç tanesi gerçekten başarılı olabilir. Geriye kalanların çoğunluğu ya gerektiği kadar ilgi görmez ya da çok kısa sürede unutulur. Bu araştırmanın amacı sosyal bilimlerdeki başarılı araştırmaların isterlerini belirlemek ve ortaya koymaktır. Araştırma altı altın kural önermekte ve her bir altın kuralın (İngilizcedeki) ilk harflerinden oluşan FADAPA adını verdiğimiz bir model ortaya koymaktadır. FADAPA, ilginç bir başlık seçimini ve seçilen konunun kapsamlı olarak araştırılmasını ilk iki ister olarak önermektedir. Sonraki iki önerme ise basit ve tercihen bir görsel modelin geliştirilmesini ve bu modelin mümkün olduğunca yaygın bir şekilde uygulanmasını tavsiye etmektedir. Geliştirilen modelin ve uygulama sonuçlarının yayınlanması bir sonraki öneri olarak sunulmaktadır. Son öneri olarak, modelin akademisyenler ve iş dünyası arasında reklâmının yapılması ve yaygınlaştırılması, literatürde yer edinmek isteyen araştırmacılara özelikle tavsiye edilmektedir. Modelin geçerliliğini göstermek için yazar, literatürde çok bilinen üç çalışmayı (Maslow'un İhtiyaçlar Hiyerarşisi, McGregor'un Teori X ve Y'si ve Porter'ın Beş Güç Modeli) FADAPA kuralları çerçevesinde incelemiştir.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Thousands of new and assertive social studies are performed each year by thousands of different scholars from all around the world. Unfortunately only a small portion of them manage to pass the strict evaluation processes of SSCI journals. Even worse, only a few of the published studies become really successful and broadly accepted. Although,

this elimination process is quite natural from the perspective of readers, it is very disheartening from the perspective of researchers.

Unraveling the secrets of successful studies and developing a simple roadmap will not only motivate researchers but also spare valuable resources that are currently wasted for unsuccessful research. An inattentive glance might not state any significance but a deeper look will definitely illustrate the similarities between successful studies in social sciences.

The focus and the main research question of this study are about the determination of these typical properties of victorious efforts. The study basically aims to develop simple rules of thumb for researchers who want to be notable in the literature of social sciences.

The term "**rule of thumb**" might be defined as a general guidepost for determining behaviors and addresses a principle with broad application which is not intended to be strictly accurate or absolutely reliable for every situation. Rule of thumbs are usually based upon experience and common sense. They aim to provide generally effective or approximately correct results for certain situations.

The author is not pretentious about a definitive answer; however, but on the other hand he believes there are some rules of thumb, which he summarize as FADAPA model, might provide very close answers to our research question.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to make any social research more valuable and relevant, it must be abstracted and made more general [1]. This requires development of successful social studies and reader-friendly theories which establish linkages between research and practice [2]. Unfortunately this is usually not that easy [3]. Just like the development and publication of a social research, it's evaluation is also difficult. Our main purpose in this study is to highlight the primary rules of successful research in a simple manner. However

before we proceed with the proposed model it would be more appropriate to discuss how social studies or researchers are graded and the current status in Turkey.

1.1   Journals as a Scale

Evaluation of scientific research is crucial [4] and is one of the challenging issues and unfortunately none of the existing approaches provide an objective, transparent and omnibus tool for this purpose yet. However, many people content themselves with the number of publications and citations in journals listed in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) which is a kind of database of scholarly literature. SSCI is used in many important ways where it's most conspicuous use is showing whose work gets cited in other research [5].

The first scholarly journal, Journal des Scavans, was published as a new medium of communication in 1665, and was soon followed by the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society [6]. For more than three centuries the journal has played a pivotal role in the creation and transmission of knowledge by serving as the primary medium of scholarly communication, and has remained essentially unchanged in form and function over its lifetime. Science as we know it is scarcely imaginable without the scholarly journal.

Despite its benefits to science and scholarship, the paper journal system has been subject to much criticism (e.g. [7], [8]). Deficiencies noted by some authors include perceived problems with the peer review process (that it suppresses new ideas, favors authors from prestigious institutions, and causes undue delays in the publication process), high costs that are escalating faster than the rate of inflation, and lack of selectivity. Spiraling costs and long publication delays are perhaps the most serious of these criticisms [9].

1.2   Current Status in Turkey

The overall performance of Turkish Universities in journal publications is very low especially when the number of academicians is considered [10].

Starting from the last decade of the 20th century, some universities in Turkey started to use the number of publications as a criterion for academic assignments and promotions [11]. In year 2001, YÖK announced publication in international journals as a requirement for advancement to the rank of Associated Professor [10]. But as illustrated in the following table, the ratio of publications in social sciences is only about %10 of those in mathematical and physical sciences.
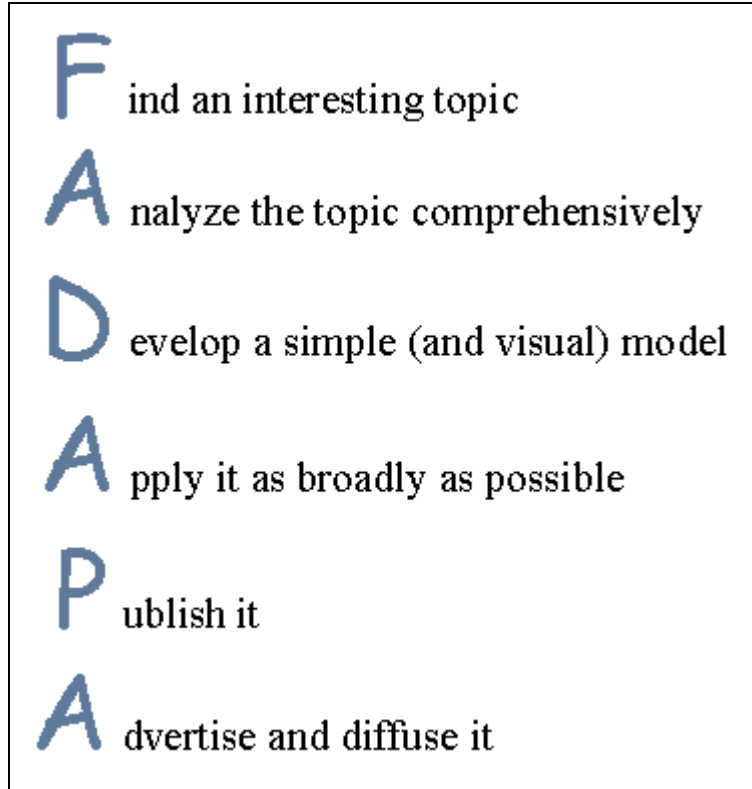
	UNİVERSİTE ADI	SCI	SSCI	AHCI	Brüt Toplam**	Net Toplam** *	Öğr.Üye. Say.	Oran
1	TOBB EKONOMİ VE TEKNOLOJİ ÜNİVERS.	60	10	0	70	67	46	1,46
2	BOZOK ÜNİVERSİTESİ	29	0	0	29	29	22	1,32
3	BAŞKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ	445	27	1	473	460	353	1,30
4	GEBZE YÜKSEK TEKNOLOJİ ENSTİTÜSÜ	134	11	0	145	140	134	1,04
5	KOÇ ÜNİVERSİTESİ	122	25	2	149	140	140	1,00
6	ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ	635	68	9	712	692	727	0,95
7	ERCİYES ÜNİVERSİTESİ	474	11	1	486	477	549	0,87
8	BİLKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ	219	59	13	291	267	319	0,84
9	ÇANKAYA ÜNİVERSİTESİ	57	2	0	59	58	71	0,82
10	ATILIM ÜNİVERSİTESİ	55	5	0	60	59	76	0,78

Studies in social sciences are indexed in SSCI and as can clearly be seen from the statistics, number of publications is quite low. Moreover, being published does not always mean that all published manuscripts are successful. Although our study does not focus on the publication rules, we believe that a study written along the basics of our proposed model might have a higher chance to be published.

3.   PROPOSED FADAPA MODEL

Contradictory recommendations regarding successful research methods are indicative of lack of consensus on a generic model [12]. Our

proposed model includes six simple rules for a successful social research. The name of the model, "FADAPA" is derived out of the initials of these six rules as illustrated in the following figure.

F ind an interesting topic

A nalyze the topic comprehensively

D evelop a simple (and visual) model

A pply it as broadly as possible

P ublish it

A dvertise and diffuse it

Figure 1 Six FADAPA rules

Each rule of FADAPA is focused on a different aspect of the success criteria and is explained in the following sections.

3.1   (F) Rule: Find an interesting topic

An interesting topic and/or research problem will have a high potential for an empirical response. A novel insight that adds significantly to -or against- previous understandings [1] and a key ingredient in having some impact [13] will attract greater attention.

Although some scholars prefer manuscript submitted for publication to be more rigorous than being interesting, relevant, and challenging [14], some others encourage studies leading to more interesting ideas, contrary to the more established "dataistic" methodologies [15], and claim that there are strong forces favoring new ideas [16].

For an award-winning research Dicle [17], recommends to choose the topic carefully and some thought should be put in the decision process. Similarly we propose the interestingness of a social research as a fundamental requirement and possibly the main factor that attracts the attention of the readers including scholars, academicians and business practitioners.

3.2   First   (A)   Rule: Analyze   the   topic comprehensively

Successful studies begin with a review of relevant body of literature [18] and include both well-known and less known issues about the topic [19]. Strongest researches begin with use of a good variety of most up-to-date, and the most specific and expert, resources [17]. This definitely requires comprehensive analysis of the selected research problem. A researcher shall not ignore any of the predate studies that are related to his/her field of study. This effort will assist him/her in two ways:

First, comprehensive analysis of the literature will establish a healthy foundation for his/her work. Second, it will lend wings to the study from the perspective of the readers. They will possibly feel more confident when they

see that their former knowledge on the topic does not conflict with the new study or is clearly discussed and explained in the paper.

3.3 (D) Rule: Develop a (visual and) simple model

Although model (or theory) development is generally accepted as the most challenging part of management research [3, 20], it is broadly accepted as one of the most inevitable characteristics of a successful study [21, 22, 23, 24].
Broadly, a model can be developed by relying on speculative thinking or empirical observation preferably followed by careful analysis [1]. In all cases the developed model needs to be simple to be clearly understood by the readers. Simple model that explain a complex phenomenon in a holistic approach are generally appreciated in the literature (e.g. [25] Hierarchy of Needs; [26] Theory X and Y). Since visual models are learned and remembered more easily than others (e.g. [27] Five Competitive Forces), we also advise researchers to express their models visually.

3.4 Second (A) Rule: Apply it as broadly as possible

Empirical analyses or in other words the applications of the study play a crucial role in shaping the theory no matter if a theory begins with a logically deduced conjecture, the detailed observation of a phenomenon, or an "interim struggle" such as abstracting and generalizing (Kalnins, 2007). A model without an empirical study lacks foundations for its reliability and validity. Broad application of a model is not only for convincing readers but also for the researchers themselves since they may believe that by observing contrary or inconclusive empirical evidence, they have cast doubt on an explanation that they had considered plausible a priori [28].

Three criteria mainly draw the framework for the decision on a topic by the researcher: length, research resources and analytical tools [17]. Although some scholars have argued that empirical material has no systematic role to play in theory (or model) building [29, 30], some others tended to rely heavily on and emphasized the importance of empirical data

[1]. Our proposed FADAPA model advocates broad application of the model and the use of empirical material as input for theorizing.

3.5   (P) Rule: Publish it

Fundamental to formal scholarly communication [9] scientists who have to say something important need to publish their findings [4]. Although we are aware of the difficulties of publishing, especially for non-native speakers, we strongly encourage researchers to seek ways to take place in broadly accepted journals in social sciences.

Publishing limitations can be categorized as internal and external difficulties. Internal limitations address researcher oriented issues such as *the lack of knowledge about scientific research process and usage of statistical techniques* [31]. External limitations, on the other hand, are not directly related to the researcher such as injustice in review process and requirement for high language skills.

3.6   Third (A) Rule: Advertise and distribute it

The most crucial parameter in the assessment of research performance is international scientific influence [4]. Publishing a social research may be accepted as the first step of the distribution of the study; however it is not enough. The researcher should seek ways to diffuse his/her studies.

In some cases the readers advertise a social study voluntarily. This usually happens when they feel confident and are impressed about the model. If the researcher is lucky enough, he/she might even find some followers who are going to work for the success of the topic. The popular scientific management rules of Frederick Taylor for example is accepted, applied and diffused by thousands of followers. Of course, this is very exceptional and researchers who want their studies to be known broadly have to endeavor.

4.   SAMPLE SCALING

In this study, we propose six rules of thumb for a successful study. To prove the validity of our proposed model we evaluated three well-known successful theories from the perspective of FADAPA and explained in the following sections.

4.1   Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

We selected the Hierarchy of Needs theory of Abraham Maslow as the first sample. One of Maslow's [32] main theses is that people all over the world are motivated by the same universal needs even though they find very different strategies to gratify them. Furthermore he assumes that these universal needs can be ranked in a hierarchy of needs. As illustrated in the following figure the hierarchy of needs includes physiological needs, the need for safety and security, the need for love and belonging, the need for esteem, and the need to actualize the self [33].

Figure 2 Hierarchy of Needs (Adopted from [34])

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Maslow [25, 33] attempted to synthesize a large body of research related to human motivation which was a new and interesting topic at those days. Maslow [33] published his theory about 65 years ago and it has since become one of the most popular and often cited theories of human motivation. It means that Maslow theory successfully fulfilled the publishing, advertisement and distribution recommendations of FADAPA model.

4.2   McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

Our second example, Douglas McGregor's Theory X and theory Y, theories of human motivation and leadership styles created and developed in the 1960s. According to "Theory X" management assumes employees are inherently lazy and will avoid work if they can [26]. Theory X managers are expected to believe that everything must end in blaming someone and all prospective employees are only out for themselves.

On the other hand, Theory Y assumes that employees may be ambitious, self-motivated, and anxious to accept greater responsibility, and exercise self-control, self-direction, autonomy and empowerment. Theory Y managers expect that, given the right conditions, most people will want to do well at work and that there is a pool of unused creativity in the workforce and the satisfaction of doing a good job is a strong motivation in and of itself.

McGregor's theory definitely matches the six rules of FADAPA. As an interesting field of research, McGregor's studies [26] on managerial behavior had a profound effect on management thinking and practice.

4.3   Porter's Five Forces Model

Our final sample, the Five Forces Model of Michael Porter is a tool used to explore the competitive environment in which a product or company operates and looks at five key areas namely, the threat of new entrants, the

power of buyers, the power of suppliers, the threat of substitutes, and competitive rivalry [27] as illustrated in the following figure.
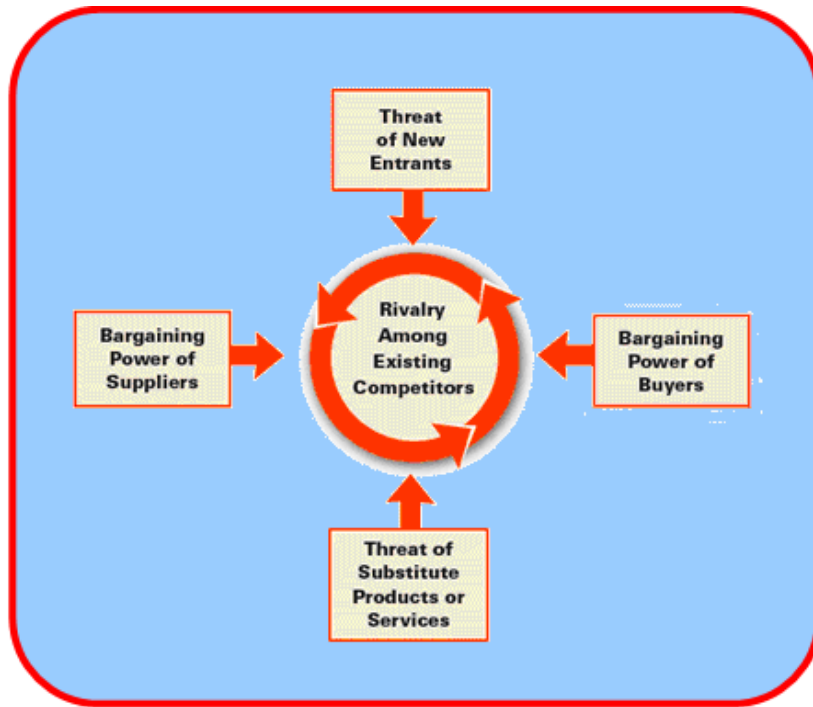

Figure 3 Porter's Five Forces (Adopted from [35])

"Porter's five forces" have shaped a generation of academic research and business practice. Rivalry was (and still is) an interesting topics especially in the field of business. Porter successfully applied, published and distributed his theory and deserved to be graded high from the perspectives of FADAPA.

5.   CONCLUSIONS

In this study we aimed to compile and emphasize the fundamental requirements of a successful social research and proposed the FADAPA model. FADAPA model proposes six "rules of thumb" where the two rules

are the selection of an interesting topic and the comprehensive analysis of the field of interest. Development of simple and preferably visual model followed by a broad application is advised as the following two requirements. Publishing the developed model and the empirical results is introduced as the next step of successful research. Finally, advertisement and diffusion of the model among scholars, academicians and business people is presented as the last requirement which should be fulfilled by the researchers. We strongly believe that FADAPA will be a useful tool for researchers who want to be notable in the literature.

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