The Role of Al-Quds University Library in Developing Scientific Research in the Digital Environment

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Abstract

The digital milieu and the age of information and modern technologies constitute a major challenge in the process of building and strengthening the capabilities of scholars and university students alike in production and scientific research. This is mainly due to the competition it imposes which bears a leadership character for the nature of the required scientific and intellectual production, and the entailed research performance. The study objective aims to identify the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment. The study results showed the essential role that Al-Quds University library plays in supporting the academic process, developing scientific research, and popularizing the scientific publishing culture among university students. The authors recommend the need to keep pace with technological developments adding and purchasing new electronic information sources that meet the needs of its beneficiaries, and to provide budgets allocated for new subscriptions to international scientific journals of high rating.

Keywords: Scientific research, academic process, digital environment, data and information sources, university library, electronic library.

1. Introduction

Today, the world is witnessing a rapid and continuous change in technology and production methodologies, especially in light of the entrenchment of the phenomenon of globalization with its economic, social and political dimensions. Under these circumstances which have become more complex, various countries – including developing and advanced industrialized countries – find themselves facing a great challenge and a rather difficult choice, which is the need for adopting new economic systems further based on knowledge, creativity, and human innovation (Kurdi, 2015).

The talk nowadays is focused on the priority that investment in human capital occupies as an effective development strategy based on building human capacities, and then efficiently employing them in the service of the development process within the framework of an integrated system for acquiring knowledge. As is known, the capabilities of developed countries enable them to develop

the performance of this system efficiently and effectively, unlike developing countries that have suffered and are still suffering from a system of acquiring knowledge from a complex crisis. This consequently resulted in the backwardness of society whereby this system is an integral part of it, and a society that does not value knowledge will definitely not provide a system for acquiring knowledge, resources and the environment necessary to activate it and increase its efficiency, and thus the end result will be low productivity and a lack of development in light of the world of globalization (Ferjani, 2002).

In light of this new situation and this development in the era of information and modern technologies, there has become an urgent need to enhance the various capabilities of the human element and to give it a leadership capacity to deal with this information and how to make optimal use of it, and employ it in a way that achieves benefit and reduces the time spent in obtaining this information.

The importance of university libraries stems from their role in performing the university's academic, educational, research and societal mission in achieving the university's goals of educating, qualifying and preparing specialized human resources, in addition to encouraging scientific research and protecting cultural heritage and human thought. The success of universities is also linked to the viability and adequacy of their own library. The university library is also considered one of the basic components in evaluating modern and reliable universities at the local, international and regional levels (Al-Hamshari & Alyan, 2013).

University libraries stand at the top of the pyramid in relation to other types of libraries on the grounds that they are the backbone of institutions of higher education and scientific research, and also on the basis that they provide their services to the university audience, scholars and researchers, who are the epitome of society and the thinking mind of the nation. It also shows the importance of the university library through its effective contribution to the field of study and scientific research. As an institution, the university's main pillars are: a professor, research and an active library. On the basis of this consideration, the importance of university libraries emerges through the active and effective contribution in the fields of study and research. The university as an educational institution and its main function is represented in three main dimensions, which are the transfer of knowledge stock, knowledge creation, and community service (Bouafia & Abdel Hadi, 2012).

This study came from this viewpoint with the aim to identify the role of the library in the development of scientific research in the digital arena.

2. Background and Theoretical Framework

Information and communication technology has clearly affected the services of university libraries and information centers through the ways and methods in which they provide their services to their beneficiaries. It is considered a positive force for organizing and managing information, facilitating the task of researchers and beneficiaries, and meeting their needs in the easiest and least costly way. Consequently, adapting to it has become a great necessity and a challenge that various types of libraries, including universities, are betting on, given the peculiarities that characterize the community of beneficiaries of their services and the diversity of their information needs. The extent of the development of any library is measured by the extent to which it integrates information technology and the extent of the shift from traditional work to automated work, which enables it to provide electronic information services in line with the digital environment that currently prevails in societies (Al-Dabbas, 2013).

The university library is considered one of the most important and main facilities of the university institution, as it is entrusted with achieving the university's academic and research mission and achieving its goals in educating human cadres in various disciplines and sciences who will, in turn, be able to assume their responsibilities towards the various community issues. That is in addition to supporting and attributing the scientific research process among students and faculty members, and its protection and preservation of heritage and human thought as well as facilitating the task of accessing it by the public beneficiaries of society (Salameh, 2002).

Moreover, the university library is considered the main element in a university, which provides assistance to its beneficiaries of intellectual and mental food, helping them to perform their educational and research role as required, and making them an effective tool in changing society and developing it, both culturally and scientifically (Kandalji, 2008).

2.1 The Challenges Facing University Libraries in the Digital Environment

With all the technological development, the use of electronic resources has greatly expanded in institutions of higher education and scientific research. Due to their speed in providing information,

libraries are working to integrate these digital resources into their documentation chain. With the spread of the Internet and the integration of digital vessels into the documentation practices of all researchers and students, university libraries are facing a number of challenges. Those include: the increase in the volume of electronic publications and the increase in their prices, and consequently the need to reconsider their acquisition policy, in addition to the need for appropriate detection and retrieval tools due to the diversity of sources and their scattering on different vessels, and finally, the urgency of the beneficiaries in their requests for remote information services (Kaddoura, 2006).

2.2 The advantages of employing information technology and its applications in university libraries:

The increase in the employment of information technology and its applications in university libraries and information centers has considerably spread throughout the contemporary world. This advanced technology has helped the administrative and professional manpower in performing the administrative and professional tasks and functions with high quality. It also provided access to shared information resources and other sources in cooperative information networks. In general, the employment of information and communication technology in libraries and information centers resulted in the following benefits:

1. Better access to the collection of information resources available through information sources and the direct public catalog of the library.

2. Greater availability of information than was available before the dawn of information networks.

3. Better management of available information resources.

4. Enhancing the capabilities and skills of the beneficiaries so that they can deal with advanced information technology from wherever they are, and at any time.

5. Providing the ability to add an information facility without the need for fixed physical assets.

6. Providing the ability to add new services such as current information briefing, selective broadcasting of information, and production of information reports with direct access to the information networks available and subscribed to by the institution (Al-Hadi, 2008).

2.3 Electronic Libraries

Today, libraries are facing a range of alternatives available to information institutions, including the Internet, digital and virtual libraries, and other things that fall under the digital environment. For all this, university libraries had to rise to meet these challenges with a high spirit as they find themselves

in an identity crisis due to the rapid growth of information technology and the means of storing, broadcasting and retrieval of data, and because of the information needs and complexity of the academic community. Beneficiary services or information services have gone through great changes and developments in their history. After services were provided to the beneficiary in the traditional way, they turned to the automated method through the introduction of technological applications in the management of libraries, which proved their efficiency, ability, and effectiveness in comparison to traditional methods. An electronic library is defined as a library that has incorporated electronic information technologies into its organization for greater efficiency, and whose all operations are automated on the line, including bibliographic search, provisioning, indexing, lending, community resource files and public networks (Al-Qader, 2016).

2.4 Introduction to Al-Quds University Library

Al-Quds University library was established with the early days of the founding of Al-Quds University in 1978, and it is a scientific, cultural, educational and social edifice in the Jerusalem area. It includes a number of sources and information repositories in all its forms and types, printed, audio, visual and electronic, in addition to manuscripts, which are estimated at about 113,000 books, indexed and supplied on the computerized library program. A total of 55% of the books are in Arabic, and 45% are in English, in addition to 5000 Master's degree thesis in Arabic and English, more than 80% of which are available on the digital repository of Al-Quds University, and work is still underway to add the rest of the thesis dissertations to the digital repository. Furthermore, there are 100 computers that are available in the library and that are used for research and education purposes by the beneficiaries inside the university, distributed over five research laboratories and reading halls. The library provides its various services to more than 13,000 students, in addition to 800 university employees and staff (Jamous, 2021).

The university library is characterized by providing sources of knowledge and research that reflect the comprehensiveness of the university in its various and diverse academic programs at the level of diploma, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate degrees as well as catering for the interests of its faculty members. These sources are organized according to international specifications, standards and practices, specifically the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules and the Library of Congress Classification System. The library also has access to more than seven databases and global electronic information sources for books and full-text periodicals in various fields of knowledge; In

addition to many free electronic resources available for limited periods and during cultural exchanges along with the digital repository of Al-Quds University.

Al-Quds University library includes branches beside the Central Library – Munib Rashid Al-Masri Library – Al-Quds University Main Campus / Abu Dis as follows:

1. *Al-Babtain Library*: Campus of the Faculty of Economic and Commercial Sciences, in Beit Hanina, Jerusalem.

2. *Hind Al-Husseini Library*: Campus of the College of Arts for Girls - Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem.

3. *Media Library*: College of Media Campus, Al-Bireh City.

4. *The Public Library*: The Old City, Jerusalem.

5. *The specialized library for postgraduate programs*: University Campus, Dura city.

The library contains three main sections: The Technical Procedures and Acquisitions Development Section, the Users and Informatics Services Section, and the Electronic and Archiving Services Section. In its strategic plan, the library administration intends to create a new department called "Development and Scientific Research" to enhance the library's role in supporting the academic process and developing scientific research. The library's services stem from its general mission, which aims to collect, organize, retrieve and disseminate information sources in all its forms in the various ways, in addition to carrying out the process of technical and research guidance for university students and faculty members alike to obtain distinguished educational and academic performance (Jamous, 2021).

2.5 The Vision of Al-Quds University Library

The vision of Al-Quds University library is to enrich the scientific, academic and intellectual life in the community of Al-Quds University students, faculty and staff, and thinkers to produce distinguished and pioneering scientific performance that achieves a high level of competition in serving the local Palestinian community and the desired development programs.

In its mission, Al-Quds University library seeks to create an active and interactive environment between the library, the university's academic community and the local community by providing the educational and academic process at Al-Quds University with various sources of information, and correcting scientific research and research studies carried out by the university students and the various departments in a way that contributes to a continuous, qualitative development in the various

fields of human and social knowledge by means of delivering various sources of information, technologies and multimedia, and supporting the scientific research process by providing opportunities and accessibility to information sources in their various forms and types in order to achieve a high level of quality and competition. That is in addition to contributing to filling the needs of local sustainable development programs in light of the massive and rapid developments taking place at the global and international levels in the economic, social, intellectual and cultural fields, relying on the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Palestinian people, strengthening human rights and preserving the environment (Jamous, 2021).

3. Related Previous Studies

Satisfaction with library resources and services have received increasing attention in llibraries and educational sciences in recent decades. In a recent study, Hindagolla's study (2021), Entitled *Exploring Undergraduates Satisfaction with Library Resources and Services: A Case Study of the Science Library, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*, aimed to identify the level of university students' satisfaction and their perceptions towards library resources, and the services provided by the Science Library of Peradeniya University. The survey research method was adopted to achieve the objectives of the study, and a questionnaire was sent to 442 university students in the Science Department, of which 371 were duly filled and returned, and were subsequently analyzed. The results showed that more than 60% of the university students visited the library on a daily and weekly basis, and more than 80% of them visited the library for various purposes. In terms of available resources, the majority of undergraduate students were satisfied with the range of library books, periodicals, and journals available. However, only 39% of students reported that they were satisfied with the electronic resources in the library, and the results showed that only 32% of students were satisfied with the audio-visual materials available in the library. While the study results showed that for other library services, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the lending, reference, referral and photocopying services; However, 11% of them were not satisfied, and 13% of students were not familiar with the electronic services provided by the library. Moreover, the results showed that the limited number of computers provided by the library in addition to the lack of Wi-Fi services facilities, the lack of awareness and knowledge of the website of the library on the web, as well as the difficulties of accessing the Internet and conducting the process of searching for scientific articles, were some of the main reasons for student dissatisfaction.

However, the majority of undergraduate students praised the library staff for providing a great service. The outcomes demonstrated that undergraduate students have a positive perception of the library and its services. Based on the results, the author communicated some suggestions to increase user satisfaction, enhance library resources and service quality.

In their study, entitled *The role of the Internet in the Development of Scientific Research*, Munsir and Amara (2020) aimed to shed some light on the Internet and the ways to employ it and benefit from its applications in the development of scientific research, and the extent of the importance of the Internet as a source of research information, in light of our current era of information and the cumulative information explosion resulting from the speed of knowledge production through communication technology and the new and diverse information technology, especially the Internet, which transcends geographical borders to spread knowledge wherever there is a strong need by educational institutions, including universities, to keep abreast of technological developments, including the application of the Internet in obtaining the multiple scientific tributaries of all aspects of knowledge through the information provided by that technology and its use in the exchange of information, its dissemination and application in the multiple scientific fields.

The study of Ali (2018), entitled *University Libraries and their Role in Developing Scientific Research in the Light of the Technological Environment: University of Technology as a Model*, states that the technological environment has a significant impact on the functions, activities, and tasks of university libraries, to the extent that it changed many of its functions and became the most computerized one. Therefore, the study aims to identify the role of university libraries in developing scientific research in light of the technological environment, to determine the extent of their support for faculty and researchers at the University of Technology, and to identify how these libraries contribute to enriching scientific research and the extent to which faculty and researchers benefit; as well as investigating the ways that would enable university libraries to maintain their position and role in the service of scientific research. The study results found that the percentage of teachers who were reluctant to use the library was 67%, justifying this with the availability of resources, whether they are up-to-date, and the weakness of the services provided by the library to teachers, which often do not live up to their expectations. The study recommended the necessity of acquiring modern resources and being linked to global databases commensurate with the specializations of the university, and working on developing and evaluating the services provided in the light of the

technological environment, and providing a special space for teachers for the purpose of supporting them in the field of preparing scientific research.

The study of Khudair & Abdul Wahed (2014), entitled *The Central Library of the University of Basra and its Role in Supporting Scientific Research*, identified the extent of the contribution of the central library at the University of Basra in meeting the different needs of the beneficiaries, in addition to showing the role of the library in supporting and attributing scientific research. The importance of this study is exemplified by showing the role of the central library of the University of Basra in developing the scientific research movement based on its capabilities and what it contains of information sources and modern technologies. The study used the case study method in the practical aspect as well as the documentary method in the theoretical aspect. The authors also interviewed the officials of the central library in addition to distributing 480 questionnaires to the public beneficiaries of graduate students and faculty members. The results of the study showed a lack of information sources, especially Arab and foreign periodicals, in addition to the lack of subscription to those periodicals. The results also showed a lack of budget allocated for the purchase of information sources that meet the needs of the beneficiaries. Consequently, the study recommended the necessity of subscribing to Arab and foreign scientific journals and periodicals, and the availability of the necessary budgets for the purchase of information sources.

4. Statment of the Problem

The university library is the nerve that drives any scientific research because it is a center that brings together all research and science, but with technological development it no longer plays the same role. The digital environment and the age of information and modern technologies constitute a major challenge in the process of building and strengthening the capabilities of scholars and university students in production and scientific research, due to the competition that it imposes, bearing a pioneering character, as a result of the nature of scientific and intellectual production and the required research performance. Accordingly, Palestinian university students in general, including Al-Quds University students, face a great challenge while writing their scientific reports and projects, either due to their poor knowledge of the basics of scientific research, or perhaps due to a lack of knowledge of electronic data and information sources, and the inability to benefit from, and deal with them.

The study aims to identify the role of the library in developing scientific research in the digital environment. The study is the first of its kind in Palestine to the knowledge of the authors. The importance of the study stems from the fact that it focuses on identifying the reality of the work of the Al-Quds University library and determining its role in supporting the academic process, in addition to knowing its role in developing scientific research, and in creating an environment encouraging of research and scientific excellence.

5. Hypotheses

Taking into consideration, the set objectives, questions and variables of the study, the study addresses the main hypotheses:

1. There are no statistically significant differences at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment from the students' point of view according to gender.

2. There are no statistically significant differences at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment from the students' point of view according to place of residency.

3. There are no statistically significant differences at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment from the students' point of view according to the family's monthly income.

4. There are no statistically significant differences at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment from the students' point of view according to major.

5. There are no statistically significant differences at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment from the students' point of view according to academic level.

6. There are no statistically significant differences at the level $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment from the students' point of view according to academic year.

6. Methodology

Based on the nature of the study and its objectives, the current study used the descriptive approach, for its suitability for the purposes of the study, in terms of monitoring and analyzing the reality of the study problem at the present time and as it is in reality through its description, interpretation, and prediction, which is the appropriate and best approach – in the authors' opinion – for such studies.

7. Population and Sampling

The study community represents Al-Quds University students from various educational disciplines at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, who participated and attended the lectures of the "Scientific Research Methods" course, which mainly based its requirements on the electronic data and information sources provided by the university library in addition to scientific publishing. The specialized library staff participated in organizing and implementing the lectures during the first and second academic semesters of the year 2021/2022, whereby the number of participating students reached 1,100 male and female students. To achieve the objectives of the study, simple random sampling was used, and 275 questionnaires were distributed comprising 25% of the study population.

The results indicate that the majority of the respondents were female students (63%) compared to 37% of their male counterparts, such that their number was 92 students out of the total number of respondents. With regards to the discipline, the majority of respondents were from the human sciences (69%) compared to 31% from the natural sciences. As for the place of residence, the percentage of students living in cities was close to the percentage of students living in the countryside, whereby the percentage of urban and rural residents was 47% and 48%, respectively. A total of 5% of students were camp residents. Concerning the family's monthly income, the study results indicated that students from low-income families (3000-3500 NIS) comprised the highest of the study sample (28%). A total of 13% of respondents were in the 4001-4500 NIS, and 3501-4000 NIS category. Students with a monthly income of 5000 shekels or more comprised 8% of the sample. These results indicate the role played by the library and Al-Quds University in providing all possible opportunities in the field of developing scientific research, and providing free global electronic data and information sources for the vast majority of university students, especially those

with low income. Thus, students benefit from these resources to the maximum extent possible, which helps them to improve their performance and the quality of their scientific production. With regards to the academic level, most respondents were at the Bachelor's degree level (79%). This communicates the need of undergraduate students, more than other higher academic level students, for the electronic services provided by the library, as well as an indication of the great efforts exerted by Al-Quds University in building a generation of researchers who possess high capabilities and skills in the field of scientific research production at the basic levels of study. While the percentage of students at postgraduate levels was 21%. In the field of academic level, the percentage of first-year students was 32%, followed by second year students at 24%, then third year students (21%), and subsequently fourth year students (15%), and finally fifth year students (8%). These results indicate the extent to which students, affiliated with the university at the first-year level, are interested in getting to know databases and electronic information sources that benefit them and help them prove their abilities in the academic process, and in the field of continuing their membership as students at the university, in addition to the interest of Al-Quds University in instilling and providing students with research skills and scientific studies from the first day of their admission to the university.

8. Instrumentation

The authors designed a questionnaire for this purpose, and it consisted of 23 statements, distributed on two main axes, in addition to the statistical information of the study community, which was sent through the student's e-mail database.

9. Limitations

9.1 Spatial limits: This study was conducted at Al-Quds University, Abu Dees Campus.

9.2 Human limits: The study targeted Al-Quds University students from various disciplines at the undergraduate and postgraduate degree levels, who were registered for the "Scientific Research Methods" course for the first and second academic semesters of the year 2021/2022.

9.3 Time limits: This study was conducted during the period of September 2021 until the end of March 2022.

10. Findings

10.1 The Role of Al-Quds University Library in Developing Scientific Research in the Digital Environment

The results of the study indicated that the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment was high (M 3.79, SD 0.66). This means that 75.8% of the students experienced the high role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment.

10.2 Indicators of Role of Al-Quds University Library in Developing Scientific Research in the Digital Environment

The study findings showed the indicators of the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment, ranked in a descending order as follows, the statement "computers available in the library are modern and sufficient" got the lowest rating (68%) whereas the statement "presence of a web page for the library" got the highest rating (83%). The authors view that these outcomes show the positive role of Al-Quds University library in serving the educational and academic process, and they reflect the interest that the library exerts in the development of scientific research. In this way, it differs from the results of previous studies, including Hindagolla's study (2021), whose results indicated that students were not aware of the electronic services provided by the library at their university. As well as the difference with the results of the study of Khudair & Abdul Wahed (2014), where their study indicated the lack of information sources provided by the library to university students, in addition to the lack of subscriptions to databases and information sources. The same applies with the study of Ali (2018), whose results showed the old electronic resources provided by the library, and the weakness of its services. The study recommended the necessity of acquiring modern resources for the library and being linking to international databases commensurate with the specializations of university students, in addition to the necessity of supporting students and scholars in the field of preparing scientific research.

The result of this research study also differed with the results of the study by Munsir and Amara (2020), which reported a strong need by educational institutions, including universities, to keep pace with technological developments, including the application of the Internet in obtaining multiple scientific tributaries for all aspects of knowledge through information sources.

10.3 Findings of the Hypotheses

The study explored the demographic breakdown the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment as perceived by the students with the aim of identifying any differences. Findings showed that gender, major, place of residency, family monthly income, and academic level do not indicate any statistically significant differences. However, it was found that academic year was significant variable.

In relation to gender, the results of the study showed that there were no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment as perceived by the students according to gender, T.test value was (0.317, P=0.751). Thus the hypothesis was accepted.

As for the major, the findings of the study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment as perceived by the students according to the major, T.test value was (0.426, P=0.671). Thus the hypothesis was accepted.

With regards to the place of residency, the results of the study showed that there were no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment as perceived by the students according to place of residency, F-value was (0.639, P=0.529). Thus the hypothesis was accepted.

In relation to the family monthly income, the findings of the study showed that there were no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment as perceived by the students according to academic level, F-value was (0.035, P=0.966). Thus the hypothesis was accepted.

Finally, findings indicated that that there were statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the role of Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research in the digital environment as perceived by the students according to academic year, in favor of the second academic year (M 3.99, SD 0.56), F-value was (3.044, P=0.018). Thus the hypothesis was rejected.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study showed that there is a clear role for Al-Quds University library in developing scientific research and in supporting the academic process. These results indicate the actual contribution of the library to providing students and researchers alike with the knowledge of databases and the various electronic information sources, which would help them in completing their scientific research and in enhancing their ability to meet the requirements of preparing scientific research and scientific publishing. This is feasible through the specialized library website, and the role of the library in providing multiple and varied electronic data and information sources. It also provides the opportunity to search for free electronic information sources, both in Arabic and English. The library team also guides students on how to prepare graduation projects, and provides them with knowledge of the methods of citation and referencing.

Based on the results of the study and its discussion, the study recommends the following:

1. Keeping abreast of technological developments by adding and purchasing new electronic information sources that meet the needs of beneficiaries.

2. Providing budgets for new subscriptions to highly rated international scientific journals.

3. Developing library services in the field of lending, referral, photocopying, selective broadcasting, e-mail services, and automated cataloging.

4. Building networking relationships and partnerships with libraries at the local, regional and international levels.

5. Providing the library with computer collectibles in terms of quantity and quality.

6. Organizing research incubators with the participation of university students through graduation projects.

7. Organizing science competitions with the participation of university students, and promoting student exchange locally and internationally.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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