PUBLICATION ETHICS

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Objectives

- Definition of Publication ethics

- Ethical conduct and misconduct in research and publishing

- Consequences of ethical misconduct

- Solutions for maintaining good publication ethics

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What is Publication Ethics?

Definition of Publication ethics may be derived:

- *Publication:* the **act** or **process** of **publishing,**

- a published **work**

- *Ethics:* the **principles of conduct** governing an individual or a group with focus on **moral duty** and **obligation**

(Source: Merriam-Webster dictionary)

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What is Publication Ethics?

Definition of Publication ethics may be derived:

- *Publication ethics:*   **principles of conduct** agreed upon **when publishing** results of a scientific research or other scholarly work with focus on solving moral issues

    good publishing practice

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Assumptions about published work

When reading a scientific article, the third party naturally assumes a good research practice:

- **Honesty** – the disseminated scientific record is true

- **Ethicality** – research is ethical, in accord with human rights and animal welfare, protection of research subjects is always satisfied

- **Transparency** – publication of biasing results is avoided

- **Uniqueness** – there is no intentional plagiarism

- **Fairness** – contributions of all authors are respected and mentioned

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If assumptions are not met

„Ethical violations affect the quality and integrity of science."

(Cited from: The Seven Deadly Sins in Addiction Publishing and How to Avoid Them (presentation)

Thomas F. Babor and Thomas McGovern)

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Publication misconduct –> Why should we be concerned?

Failure to publish ethically is defined as **publication misconduct**

- **Impact of publication misconduct** according to *Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)*
  - *Research community:*
    - Loss of **trust** in journals and research
    - Damage to **careers**, including those of innocent collaborators and colleagues
    - Damage to institutions' **reputations**
    - **Corruption of the evidence** base
    - **Waste of time, effort and funds**

(Cited from: COPE: Introduction to Publication Ethics: https://publicationethics.org)

Publication misconduct –> Why should we be concerned?

- **Impact of publication misconduct** according to *Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)*

  - *Research participants:*

    - Unethical research may directly **harm** research participants (researchers, research subjects, institutions, sponsors, etc.)

  - *General public:*

    - Practice and policy may be based on **fraudulent research** (fallacy)

    - Future research and **funding** may be **misdirected**

(Cited from: COPE: Introduction to Publication Ethics: https://publicationethics.org)

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Publication misconduct –> Who is responsible?

Participant roles in the publication process:

1. *Authors and researchers*

2. *Editors*

3. *Reviewers*

4. *Publishers*

5. *Funders*

All might commit a misconduct in publication ethics

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Publication misconduct –> Who is responsible?

Types of misconduct by participant roles in the publication process:

1.Authors and researchers:

Less — Severity — **More**

- carelessness in citing primary sources, selective reporting, citation bias
- redundant (duplicate) or partial publication
- unfair authorship, inappropriate authorship, gift and ghost authorship
- undeclared conflicts of interest
- unethical research – conduct of experiments that violate ethical norms
- plagiarism
- fraud – data fabrication, falsification, image manipulation leading to false impressions

(Source: Dante's Inferno: The Seven Deadly Sins in Addiction Publishing and How to Avoid Them, Thomas F. Babor and Thomas McGovern)

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Publication misconduct –> Who is responsible?

2. *Editors:*

- bias in selection
- preferential treatment for friends and colleagues
- breaching confidentiality
- intentional delays for rivals

3. *Reviewers:*

- plagiarism – ideas, text or data
- undeclared conflicts of interest
- breaching confidentiality
- intentional delays

(Cited from: COPE: Introduction to Publication Ethics: https://publicationethics.org)

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Publication misconduct –> Who is responsible?

(Cited from: COPE: Introduction to Publication Ethics: https://publicationethics.org)

4. **Publishers:**

- plagiarism – ideas, text or data
- undeclared conflicts of interest
- breaching confidentiality
- intentional delays

5. **Funders:**

- suppressing inconvenient results
- delaying publications
- not giving authors access to data
- attempting to bias the presentation of findings
- not disclosing their involvement properly

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Most common issues in publication

Major ethical issues in publishing, explained in detail:

1. **Insufficient knowledge, selective writing, publication immaturity**

2. **Redundant (duplicate) or partial publication**

3. **Unfair authorship**

4. **Undeclared conflict of interest**

5. **Plagiarism**

6. **Fraud**

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Most common issues in publication

1. **Insufficient knowledge, selective writing, publication immaturity**

   - *Description:* misleading or misinforming the readers by insufficient or biased research

     - Examples: **failure to sufficiently review literature** – building an article on insufficient knowledge foundation

       citation nicking – citation of articles taken from other scientific works without actually reading the primary sources

       selective citation – citation of only supporting articles, willing or unwilling (ignorant) avoidance of contradicting material

       – **self-citation**

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Most common issues in publication

1. **Insufficient knowledge, selective writing, publication immaturity**

    - Outcome: embarrassment: reviewers requesting correction of apparent mistakes and more suitable study of literature

      damage of reputation of the author, co-authors and institution

    - Solution: thorough review of literature, check for retracted literature

      accurate presentation of findings

      cross-revision within the institution

      all co-authors check each-others work, they are held responsible for the content

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Most common issues in publication

2. Redundant (duplicate) or partial publication

- *Description:* case of two or more articles (papers, reports) sharing the same data without full cross-reference

  - Examples: **simultaneous submission** of a paper with the same or similar content at the same time, causing more than one journal to publish it

    duplicate publication of the same set of data and conclusions without sufficient cross-reference

    - **paraphrasing** of data and conclusions is also considered as duplication *(Elsevier: Ethics in Research & Publication)*

    'salami slicing' of a (bigger) study into several papers sharing the same hypothesis, methods and overall content

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Most common issues in publication

2. Redundant (duplicate) or partial publication

- *Description:* case of two or more articles (papers, reports) sharing the same data without full cross-reference

  - Special case: **self-plagiarism** – when an author re-uses text or graphical content without any alteration from an already published or submitted paper without correct citation reference to its source and owner of the copyright. **Owner of the copyright is often the publisher, not the author.**

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Most common issues in publication

2. Redundant (duplicate) or partial publication

- ***Is it acceptable?   No*** – generally

  Yes – in reasonable cases:

  – Publication of the **same article** in **two different languages** where the first article is **correctly cross-referenced**

  – In case of publications working with **especially large datasets** that involve **collaborating investigators across multiple investigation sites** that share the same scientific measures, hypothesis and methodology, **re-presentation of the same data is acceptable if this supports the comprehensibility of the article**

  (Source: Dante's Inferno: The Seven Deadly Sins in Addiction Publishing and How to Avoid Them, Thomas F. Babor and Thomas McGovern)

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Most common issues in publication

2. Redundant (duplicate) or partial publication

- Outcome: waste of journal resources – space for articles while other unique studies might get rejected

  unfair environment – sometimes mere number of publications influences the career score and growth

- Solution: avoid duplicate or partial publication

  always provide sufficient acknowledgment to the source and owner if paraphrasing or re-using text, data or graphical material

  Provide explanation if some major overlap with previously published paper is necessary

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Most common issues in publication

3. Unfair authorship

"All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed."

(Elsevier: Ethics in Research & Publication, paraphrased from ICMJE- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors)

- ***Who qualifies as an author? The person who is responsible for...***

  - Substantial contribution to the study, concept or design
  - Data collection and processing, analysis and interpretation
  - Substantial drafting, revising, and final writing
  - Approval of the final version

- **Generally: all authors should be able to defend the paper in its entirety**

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Most common issues in publication

3. Unfair authorship

- *Description:* failure to give credit to all authors that qualify for authorship or assigning credit to persons that did not contribute substantively. Unfair authorship is dishonest.

  - Types: **ghost author** – author's **identity is not stated**, yet their contribution is substantial. Often a payed science writer.

  guest author – an author that **did not contribute** sufficiently yet is listed in order to **increase credibility or chances of publication** of the paper, usually at the end of the author's list. Often the head of department or director.

  gift author – a person whose **association with the research is trivial**. Gift authorship **serves mainly the receiver** - career growth

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Most common issues in publication

3. Unfair authorship

- Outcome: dishonest acting might lead to disputes and ill working environment

                publishers usually cannot control and influence the authorship

- Solution: honesty and avoidance of including ghost, guest and gift authors

              early discussion and agreement on the excess of contribution as well as name order in the author's list

              if roles in the research change, resulting in the change of contribution, rework the author's list so it agrees with the current situation

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Most common issues in publication

4. Undeclared conflict of interest

- *Description:* case when financial, personal, political, academic or other involvement of an author or a third party might cause bias and distortion of judgement, yet this conflict is not clearly declared at the time of paper submission

- Examples: **research funded by a commercial organization** seeking a particular result

  personal beliefs in clear contradiction with the research matter

  indirect influence on author's objectivity through their work environment that maintains external relationships

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Most common issues in publication

4. Undeclared conflict of interest

- Outcome: dishonest presentation of acquired data

  journals limiting authors with apparent (stated) conflict of interest

  if undeclared and discovered – rejection and retraction of the article

- Solution: always be honest about the funding and declare it

  reassure about the data control and ownership regulations placed by the sponsor

  In case of personal conflict, consider canceling participation in the project

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Most common issues in publication

5. Plagiarism

- The **first documented case** of plagiarism dates to **80 AD**, when **roman poet Martial** complained that other poets are reciting his work without acknowledgement (and payment for the poems). To express his disapproval and outrage he used the expression '**plagiarus**' meaning '**to kidnap**'.

- **One of the most common and certainly wrong deeds of misconduct** in scientific publishing.

- **Sanctions may be severe** (financial, social, withdrawal of work position, etc.)

- Tracking methods are now sophisticated, **software able to detect paraphrasing** in **several languages and scripts**, including Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Thai .

(Source: Wager E.: Why publication ethics is relevant to information management: experience from the Committee On Publication Ethics)

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Most common issues in publication

5. **Plagiarism**

- *Description:* theft of intellectual property by mere copying or paraphrasing of someone else's work without their permission and proper attribution and acknowledgement

- Types of plagiarism according to Elsevier:

  Literal copying – reproducing text word-by-word without citing the original

  Substantial copying – copying of materials, processes, plans of experiments, or equipment setting for conducting research without citing the original source

  Paraphrasing – reproducing ideas by paraphrasing (not word-by-word copying) without proper referencing the original source

  Text recycling – recycling one's own already published work without citing

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Most common issues in publication

5. **Plagiarism**

- Outcome: reprimand from the editor, formal hearing, letter of explanation

  rejection of paper, paper withdrawal

  damage to the author's and institution reputation, social and professional shame

  loss of work position, financial

- Solution: cite or quote properly, always address the source

  if citing greater portions of text, ask for permission by the text owner

  avoid self-plagiarism

  check your work in an anti-plagiarism database prior to submitting

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6. **Fraud**

- ***Description:*** intentional manipulation with results, fabrication of data or misrepresentation of findings in order to deceive the reader

    - Types: **fabrication – making up data** that was not obtained through experiments or observations

        falsification – manipulation with research material in order to support certain result. Falsification includes omitting of data, unacceptable manipulation with images, altering results so they fit the research goal.

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Most common issues in publication

6. Fraud

- Outcome: consequences are taken very seriously: paper retraction, suspension, trial

  fraud is dangerous as it misleads other scientists and public opinion and actions. Fraudulent papers keep reappearing in references long after they have been retracted

- Solution: training of scientists in ethical scientific methods

  reinforcing ethical values with careful mentoring

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Points of possible interest

- Sources for more details:

  publicationethics.org – COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) webpage covering all types of misconduct. Presentation of cases from real life, comprehensible flowcharts for dealing with misconduct

  Elsevier: Ethics in Research & Publication – comprehensive summary of publication ethics

  plagiarism.org – comprehensive explanation of plagiarism and how to avoid it

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Points of possible interest

- Plagiarism checking services:

  turnitin.com – academic use (high school students, university students)

  ithenticate.com – commercial use

  duplichecker.com, plagiarismchecker.com, plagramme.com, etc. – free or relatively cheap sites, usually with limited content

- Track of retracted papers:

  retractionwatch.com – popular blog describing the current cases of retracted works

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