

Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement

Our publication ethics and publication malpractice statement is mainly based on the *Code of Conduct and Best-Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors* published by the Committee on Publication Ethics, 2011 (http://publicationethics.org/files/Code%20of%20Conduct_2.pdf); The *COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers* published by the Committee on Publication Ethics, 2013 (http://publicationethics.org/files/Peer%20review%20guidelines_0.pdf); and the *International Standard for Authors* published by the Committee on Publication Ethics, 2010 (http://publicationethics.org/files/International%20standards_authors_for%20website_11_Nov_2011_0.pdf).

Editors' and Associate Editors' responsibilities

Publication decisions

- The editor, with the help from an associate editor if applicable, is responsible for deciding which papers submitted to the journal will be published.

Fair play

- The editor and the associate editor will evaluate manuscripts without regard to authors' gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, ethnic origin, nationality, or political philosophy. The decision will be based on the paper's importance, originality, and clarity, as well as the study's validity and its relevance to the journal's scope.
- Current legal requirements regarding libel, plagiarism, and copyright infringement should also be considered.

Confidentiality

- The editor, the associate editor, and any editorial staff must not disclose any information about a submitted manuscript to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, potential reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher, as appropriate.

Disclosure and conflicts of interest

- Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted paper will not be used by the editor or the members of the editorial board for their own research purposes without the author's explicit written consent.

Involvement and cooperation in investigations

- Editors have a duty to act if they suspect misconduct or if an allegation of misconduct is brought to them. This duty extends to both published and unpublished papers.
- Editors should make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a proper investigation into alleged misconduct is conducted; if this does not happen, then editors should make all reasonable attempts to persevere in obtaining a resolution to the problem. This is an onerous but important duty.

Reviewers' responsibilities

Contribution to editorial decisions

- The peer-reviewing process assists the editor and the editorial board in making editorial decisions and may also serve the author in improving the paper.

Promptness

- The reviewers should declare if they do not have the subject expertise required to carry out the review or if they are able to assess only a part of the manuscript, outlining clearly the areas for which they have the relevant expertise. Reviewers should also respond in a reasonable time-frame, especially if they cannot do the review, and without intentional delay.

Confidentiality

- Any manuscripts received for review must be treated as confidential documents. They must not be disclosed to or discussed with others except as authorized by the editor.

Standards of objectivity

- Reviews should be objective and constructive and refrain from being hostile or inflammatory and from making libelous or derogatory personal comments.

Acknowledgement of sources

- Reviewers should identify cases in which relevant published work referred to in the paper has not been cited in the reference section. They should point out whether observations or arguments derived from other publications are accompanied by the respective source. Reviewers will notify the editor of any substantial similarity or overlap between the manuscript under consideration and any other published paper for which they have personal knowledge.

Disclosure and conflict of interest

- Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not be used for personal advantage. Reviewers should declare any potentially conflicting or competing interests (which may, for example, be personal, financial, intellectual, professional, political, or religious) and seek advice from the journal if they are unsure whether something constitutes a relevant interest.

Authors' duties

Soundness and reliability

- All submitted research should have been conducted in an ethical and responsible manner and follow all relevant legislation.

Honesty

- Researchers should present their results honestly and without fabrication, falsification, or inappropriate data manipulation. Study limitations should be addressed in publications.

Originality

- Authors should adhere to publication requirements that the submitted work is original and has not been published elsewhere in any language. Work should not be submitted concurrently to more than one publication unless the editors have agreed to co-publication. If articles are co-published, then this fact should be made clear to readers.

Transparency

- All sources of research funding, including direct and indirect financial support, supply of equipment or materials, and other manners of support (such as specialist statistical or writing assistance) should be disclosed.

Appropriate authorship and acknowledgement

- The research literature serves as a record not only of what has been discovered, but also of who made the discovery. The authorship of research publications should therefore accurately reflect individuals' contributions to the work and its reporting.