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Ethical Concerns and Issues in the Publication Process*

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Abstract

Purpose: The current study suggests that any errors and other inaccuracies noted in the research process should be appropriately communicated to the editorial offices. This will try to eliminate the mistakes that may undermine the value of the publication. The present research thus focuses on the ethical issues and concerns in the publication. **Research design, data and methodology:** A content analysis applied for this study is suitable because there exists enormous textual data in the realm of ethical concerns and issues in the publication process. The current study investigated manifest and critical themes regarding ethical concerns and issues for research publication. **Results:** Researchers should consider ethical principles based on suggestions of this study when carrying out a publication for the work to be acceptable in diverse regions and the journal should be made in account of completeness and ensure that all the relevant factors are considered to promote the research's accuracy. **Conclusions:** Ethical issues denote considerations and moral elements that should be considered by the authors while making a publication. They include Beneficence, which literacy means, do no harm, respect for confidentiality, and anonymity, which is about respecting the rights and dignity of subjects identified based on personal responsibility.

Keywords : Ethical Concerns, Ethical Issues, Publication Ethics

JEL Classification Codes : I29, O30, O39

1. Introduction

Ethics is often viewed as the fabric that holds society together. According to Kumar (2018), ethics is defined as accepted codes of conduct that limit what is right and wrong. Ethics guides people on how to relate in any social setting such as society, workplace, and organizations. Researchers, editors, sponsors, authors, and other parties to publication are bound to act ethically based on their publication and dissemination of the research outcome. It is vital to consider ethical principles when carrying out a publication to be acceptable in diverse regions. The researchers are endowed

with the responsibility of making their publication available to the public. This majorly occurs if the publication relates to social accounts and tries to elaborate more on the phenomenon that revolves around human life.

Moreover, the publication should be made the account for completeness and ensure that all the relevant factors are considered to promote the report's accuracy. As highlighted by Kumar (2018), all parties in the publication should adhere to the ethical standards to guide their operations. Such policies can be essential in achieving the

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quality of publication to ensure that the right content is available to the public. In a situation where conflict of interest arises, the publishers should indicate negative ideas or thoughts regarding the publication content. Besides, the sources of funding and other external sources used in the publication should be indicated to give credit to the publishers.

In case research meets the above-described standards, then the publishers should go ahead and do their publication. Research ethics are meant to guide the publishers' daily work and offer the magazine's subject's protection and dignity. This also captures the general information to be reflected in the research. There are tension and dilemmas that may be created when the ethical standards are deliberately violated by the publishers (Ameratunga, Langguth, & Hawkes, 2018). In this regard, the publishers may face the risk of rejection of their work. The readers of various published books need to become ethically aware of the multiple ethical issues that might arise in the publication process.

Such awareness will trigger a swift investigation and take relevant actions to promote the integrity of literature. Besides, they will be able to ensure the safety of the research participant and their privacy. In further highlighting the research publication ethics, it is vital to highlight some of the critical guidelines that publishers should adhere to. The first one is an accurate presentation of the research finding (Ameratunga, Langguth, & Hawkes, 2018). In this regard, the publishers must properly include their objectives that will further demonstrate the significance of their study. Secondly, the guideline suggests that only those who qualify for the authors and have the requisite skills should be mentioned as authors.

This will ensure that their contributions are amicably reflected in the article. Third, the authors should ensure that information and facts related to previous research may lead to conflict of interests be mentioned and captured well to prevent any litigation process. Moreover, data collection procedures and analysis methods should properly be addressed to ensure that critical details are captured to avoid work replication. Moreover, the research process's raw data should be made available to the public to promote the research process's authenticity (Takashima et al., 2018). The guideline also suggests that any errors and other inaccuracies noted in the research process should be appropriately communicated to the editorial offices. This will try to eliminate the mistakes that may undermine the value of the publication. The present research will thus focus on the ethical issues and concerns in the publication.

2. Ethical Concerns in the Publication

As already noted, the core reason for the existence of

research publication ethics is to protect the integrity of the publication's informational content. Research has shown that most people prefer articles and journals published by honest authors who adhere to the guidelines and ethical principles that guide publications. Giving a brief history of ethics comes from a Greek word, *ethnos*, which means a systematic endeavor to comprehend various moral concepts to justify ethical theories and principles. Ethics is deeply rooted in the Greek philosophy that enquires the morals of life. According to Takashima et al. (2018), ethics is described as a set of principles that critically examine choices and actions. Ethics in publication deal with dynamic decision making regarding the right or wrong approach to a publication process.

Publication in scientific research work should be based on social, individual, and community values. It should not be found on the selfish personal gains to make profits but should have the social values in mind when developing its content. This will help protect the dignity of the information content of the research or even the subject (Takashima et al., 2018). The researchers' ethical attitude should always draw the interest of the social values that take into account the common interest of society. The professional laws and codes were introduced in 1940 to prevent human rights abuses through inappropriate informational content.

Publication ethics enable the protection of human rights in the research process. It has multiple codes that will allow it to achieve its key objectives. Such regulations include liberty of withdrawal from the research process, informed consent, and human protection from mental and physical harm (Purvis et al., 2020). Multiple ethical issues arise in the publication process that will be adequately get addressed in the paper. Worth noting, moral integrity is quite significant in publication and writing. Numerous ethical concerns have been realized due to the violation of the publication codes of ethics. Such ethical concerns have reduced the dignity of the publication, leading to a decline in informational content. Before addressing the publication process's ethical issues, it is vital to highlight some ethical concerns in the journal.

2.1. Fraudulent publication

This is the first ethical concern that refers to the publication that does not respect the ethical standards and other guidelines set in place. There are two significant kinds of fraudulent publications encompassing falsification and fabrication (Purvis et al., 2020). These kinds of practices indicate a deviation from the accepted codes of conduct that should be adhered to in the research process. Fraud or other types of misconduct during the research process may be noted due to human nature, inadequate supervision, fame, power, or status.

2.2. Plagiarism

It denotes a violation of research publication ethics. It signifies the action of stealing intellectual knowledge or property without crediting the authors. To avoid plagiarism, it is vital to consider the writing standard, which requires referencing and in-text citation (Purvis et al., 2020). Moreover, the writers can avoid plagiarism by interpreting the information and writing information in their own words. This will reduce the level of plagiarism.

2.3. Duplicate publication

This is another ethical concern publication, where the author decides to publish some sections of the information which had initially been published in other books or journals. The materials can be copied in the same format or entwined slightly but do not show some variation. Multiple policies have been set in place by the editors to curb duplicate publication (Andriessen et al., 2018). The practice of a single submission of the article is encouraged by research publication ethics to limit instances of resubmission of the paper. Resubmission of the document may lead to rejection, thus may disadvantage the genuine author.

The editors must be given full access to peruse the documents or articles to ensure that they meet the required ethical standards and prevent duplicate production. There are multiple instances when the number of authors who make duplicate becomes quite alarming because of failure to adhere to the ethical standards. This becomes quite detrimental as the research process's authenticity becomes questionable by the intended readers (Andriessen et al., 2018). To further curb this ethical concern, their editorial review time should significantly be increased to promote the proper scrutiny before the publication. Moreover, it is quite challenging to adopt a second version of the article that reflects the primary article to which reference was made.

To help prevent the further instance of duplicate production, multiple recommendations have been put in place. These include running the entire project through Turnitin's software to detect if a similar article had been initially presented. The second recommendation is to create sufficient time for editorial review of the work to ensure that it meets the single-entry criteria. This will only be possible through a clear set of objectives supported by proper documentation.

2.4. Authorship issues

This is another ethical concern in research publication. According to the argument brought forward by Curtis and Balloux (2020), authorship issues arises where many authors do an article of publication in a single submission. In some

scenarios, authorship disagreement may derail the entire publication process and may cause many embarrassments to the authors. The debate further leads to bitterness, anger, shame, animosity, destruction of professional relationships, or even wrecked friendship, among other impacts (Curtis, & Balloux, 2020). Multiple authorship requires the assumption of some responsibilities to ensure the content's accuracy based on some informational criteria or other written materials. However, it is vital to note that not all people who contribute to the publication process can be termed as authors.

For instance, committee members or people who offer technical assistance or people who give some financial support for the publication process should be acknowledged for their support but be recognized as the authors (Navalta, Stone, & Lyons, 2019). Besides, those who carry out reviews, analysis, and interpretation of some sections of the articles should also get acknowledged for their support. Some items impose some limitations on the number of authors to 5 or six maximum.

Navalta, Stone and Lyons (2019) offer a profound analysis of what leads to the potential authorship issues during the publication process. The first reason is the lack of common consensus based on how the project will be handle. This typically occurs at the onset of the project when others view some point of argument as vague and erroneous. Secondly, the author issues may arise where there is no clear understanding of what consists of authorship, the rights and responsibility of the authors, and the kind of knowledge gap that exists and should be exploited. Moreover, the issue may also arise where a particular author's contribution is not apparent in the publication process.

On the other hand, there are multiple solutions that research publication ethics put across. First, it creates uniform requirements that all the given text authors have to be met in the publication process. Such provisions should be restrictive and reduce instances of disunity. Additionally, the publication ethics require both the authors and the editors to collaborate effectively in meeting the given objectives (Uddin, 2018). Secondly, there should be continuous communication among the authors to realize a harmonious and cordial relationship.

Third, the publication ethics suggest sound identification of the authors' needs, strengths, weaknesses, and other preferences to reduce conflict of interest among the authors. There should be an adoption of sound and reliable systematic way of identifying and implementing authorship to reduce conflict chances. There should also be an agreement at every phase of the project to create a strong bond among the authors.

2.5. Conflict of interest

In this concern, the authors may comprise their self-

interest or ability to carry out duty based on the set standards and regulations. It is majorly categorized into an intellectual and financial conflict of interest. In line with the first type, a philosophical dispute arises where primary or general knowledge attempts to oppose the material's information (Uddin, 2018). It may be seen through careless referencing that does not support the report revealed. In this kind of conflict, there may be controversies that may arise based on instruments to be designed and tested without according them proper credit.

The result thus should get transmitted to the original developers. They will then transmit and review the content based on the copyright laws, style manuals, and other copyright transfer modules. The second type of conflict of interest is financial. This is an ethical concern that may limit the degree of financial accountability in the research process. It implies a situation where there is an economic association between the commercial company carrying out the article's mass production and the authors (Uddin, 2018). This concern violates the existing ethical guide on the publication since the authors may receive financial support, even if it is from illegal sources. It beaches the aspect of integrity, which the ethical codes serve to protect.

This kind of breach may make the authors lose their publication models and trigger investigation to establish financial conflict. Thus, the authors should be careful about where they receive their financial support from so that they do not appear to be promoting particular products of a given company. This kind of action may jeopardize the steps taken in protecting the authenticity and integrity of the publication. Rao and Andrade (2016) further suggest forming various policies that are quite requisite in the management of conflict of interest to protect the authors' publications.

2.6. Salami slicing

This is the last kind of ethical concern that violates the existing ethical principles. Under this kind of practice, the authors of various publications tend to break up large study segments into two or more publications. These kinds of elements are often referred to as "*Slices*." Multiple components are shared in the slices. These encompass study methodology, similar hypothesis, population sizes, and sampling techniques (Rao, & Andrade, 2016). This is an excellent crime since it may distort the literature and skew the scientific database. Salami slicing may also lead to wastage of time during the editors' review process, who will go through the segment of slices separately, yet they have similar or related concepts.

Moreover, it leads to the excessive inflation of the citation records of the authors. The research publication ethics requires the authors to conduct in-depth research and

epidemiological studies, enabling them to develop concrete and self-sustaining informational content for their articles or publications. It thus requires that each paper should have its independent research methodology, hypothesis, objectives, sample size and techniques, and other vital aspects of a research process (Kumar, 2020). This will significantly reduce instances of double submission that may violate the integrity of a publication process.

3. Ethical issues in publication

Having taken a more in-depth and more profound analysis of the ethical concerns that may arise due to the violation of ethical guidelines on publication, it is significant to elaborate on the moral issues. Ethical issues refer to considerations and moral elements that should be taken into account by the authors while making their publications. A study by Resnik (2019) indicates that authors who adhere to various ethical issues in the publications process are likely to disseminate their publications to rightful audiences successfully.

3.1. Beneficence

The first ethical issue is Beneficence, which literacy means, *do no harm*. This implies that the publications should benefit the readers and should not contain malicious information that may affect their mental or physical stability. This principle gives the authors professional mandates to carry out their research effectively to promote and serve the welfare of the constituents and other related parties to the publication (Ayodele et al., 2020). While forming a research hypothesis, these principles should be taken into account if the publication involves qualitative research. Moreover, the research findings published in the document should reflect on the research process's core objectives.

3.2. Confidentiality and anonymity

This is the second ethical issue that would amicably get addressed by the present essay. It is about respecting the rights and dignity of the subjects' identity based on personal responses. Research publication ethics requires the authors to maintain the confidentiality of those who contribute to the project, either directly or indirectly. In light of this argument, they are supposed to manage private information that might have been obtained during the research process.

Cambra-Badii, Guardiola and Baños (2020) described confidentiality as a situation when people are free to give out their views pertaining to a given subject without fear of future exposure by the authors. Nonetheless, most authors have found themselves in an ethical dilemma while trying to protect the research participants' information. This has

triggered many debates on the violation of moral principles that call for confidentiality and anonymity.

3.3. Informed consent

Developing a well comprehensive publication require more intensive research that would help the author to generate the right content for their publication. In light of this ethical issue, people should not be coerced into giving their contributions to a particular subject matter brought forward by the authors during their research process. Nonetheless, the research participants should give out their consent willingly, voluntarily, intelligently, and ensure that no undue influence may jeopardize their free consent (Fullas, 2019). The participant's right to autonomy should be protected, as autonomous right seeks to protect the participants from any assault, veracity, and other personal liberty.

3.4. Vulnerable group of people

Research publication ethics offer sound guidelines on how vulnerable people should be used in the author's research process as they build their projects' rich content. In line with this sentiment, vulnerable people are described as those who cannot protect their welfare and rights. Examples of this category of people include the captives, the poor, and mentally incapacitated and critically ill individuals (Sims, 2016). There are potential risks to the authors using the vulnerable group since they may not give informed consent due to undue influence. This thus calls for proper caution while dealing with them.

4. Conclusion

As earlier stated, researchers should consider ethical principles when carrying out a publication for the work to be acceptable in diverse regions. The journal should be made in account of completeness and ensure that all the relevant factors are considered to promote the report's accuracy. Consequently, the sources of funding, as well as other external sources used in the publication, should be indicated to give credit to the publishers. There are tension and dilemmas that may be created when the publishers deliberately violate ethical standards.

The authors should ensure that information and fact related to previous research may lead to a conflict of interest. Ethics originate from a Greek word, ethos that implies a systematic endeavor to comprehend various moral concepts to justify moral theories and principles. Ethics in publication deal with dynamic decision making regarding the right or wrong decisions in the publication process. Ethical integrity is quite significant in publication and writing. There are three

significant kinds of fraudulent publications that encompass falsification, plagiarism, and fabrication.

Plagiarism signifies the action of stealing intellectual knowledge or property without crediting the authors. Duplicate publication is where the authors decide to publish some sections of the information which had initially been published in other books or journals. To curb duplicate publication, editorial review time should significantly be increased to promote the proper scrutiny before the publication. Authorship issues arise where many authors do an article of publication in a single submission. It may occur due to a lack of common consensus based on how the project will be handled by the authors, where there is no clear understanding of authorship's rights and responsibilities and the kind of knowledge gap that exists.

The solution involves creating uniform requirements that all the authors of a given text have to be met in a publication process, continuous communication among the authors to realize harmonious and cordial relationships among them, and sound identification of the authors' needs, strengths, and weaknesses and other preferences. Conflict of interest occurs when the authors compromise their self-interest or ability to carry out duty based on the set standards and regulations. It is grouped into an intellectual and financial conflict of interest. Salami slicing is where the authors of various publications tend to break up large study segments into two or more publications.

Ethical issues denote considerations and moral elements that should be considered by the authors while making a publication. They include Beneficence, which literacy means, do no harm, respect for confidentiality, and anonymity, which is about respecting the rights and dignity of subjects identified based on personal responsibility. Informed consent is also part of the ethical issue, which opines that people should not be coerced into giving their contributions to a particular subject matter brought forward by the authors during their research process.

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