

Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement

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Publication ethics are core practices comprising policies and regulations for a journal to achieve highest ranks of integrity. Our publication ethics include the following aspects that guide us in our day-to-day activities and support us in the fulfillment of our goals.

1. Introduction

Asian Journal of Empirical Research (**AJER**) (E-ISSN: 2224-4425) exerts a special attention to ethical integrity of its academic content and publishing process. For this purpose, **AJER** follows the editorial guidelines, publication ethics and malpractices statement as stated in *Code of Conduct and Best-Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors* (Committee on Publication Ethics, COPE, 2011 and 2018).

Reference

Committee on Publication Ethics (2011). Code of Conduct and Best-Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors.

Retrieved from

http://publicationethics.org/files/Code_of_conduct_for_journal_editors_Mar11.pdf

Committee on Publication Ethics (2018). Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors.

Retrieved from

https://publicationethics.org/files/Principles_of_Transparency_and_Best_Practice_in_Scholarly_Publishingv3.pdf

In addition, we also follow standards and best practice guidelines set by other relevant industry associations such as the *International Committee of Medical Journal Editors* (ICJME) and the *World Association of Medical Editors* (WAME). Any external guidelines we follow are referred to in the relevant sections below. Our editors, peer reviewers and authors refer to these section guidelines frequently to maintain the integrity of academic content and publishing process. We hope that these guidelines will be useful to authors, peer reviewers, and editors.

2. Research Integrity

Research Integrity means the use of honest and verifiable methods in conducting research and ensuring scientific and professional integrity of researchers. It also involves adherence to rules, regulations, guidelines, and following commonly accepted professional codes or norms which include

- Honesty and accountability in conducting research
- Demonstrate Rigor, meticulous care and excellence in submissions
- Transparency, fairness and open communication.
- Care and respect for all participants and subjects of research.

The above principles namely honesty, fairness and accountability – are enshrined in our Ethics guidelines. Anyone who discovers that research published by **AJER** violates the above principles of the COPE guidelines should immediately inform our editorial committee on email: publishingethics@aessweb.com Concerns will immediately be addressed as per COPE guidelines and matter will be referred to our Publishing Ethics Committee with due diligence.

3. Editorial Process

There are four major stages of the editorial process before going for production: (i) rewriting or revising the manuscript based on the review (ii) Substantive or Content Editing (iii) Copy editing and (iv) Proofreading. All editorial decisions on articles submitted to our journals are made by external academic editors and based on independent peer review reports. **AJER** academic editors have complete responsibility and authority to reject/accept an article. These decisions are based on the paper's relevance to the journal's scope and its academic quality as well as potential research innovation, and the research validity.

An important aspect of editorial process is its confidentiality. **AJER** editors and editorial staff guarantee the confidentiality of the submitted papers, which are not disclosed to anyone except the reviewers, editorial committees and the publisher, if necessary. No member of the editorial board or reviewers has any conflict of interest with respect to acceptance or rejection of articles submitted. We adhere to the double-blind review in the peer review process and preserve the anonymity of reviewers. In the end, if errors are detected, we encourage publication of corrections as well as retractions. In case of any discrepancy found in our publication ethics, please contact us at email: publishingethics@aessweb.com

4. Peer Review

Our peer review process involves qualified and experienced independent researchers (e.g., university faculty, academicians) in the relevant research areas. These peer reviews assess the submitted manuscripts for originality, validity and significance to the aim and scope of the journal. The peer review process also helps editors to filter out invalid or poorly written articles.

Our expectations from reviewers include:

- Decisions on submission should be objective, free from all bias and prejudice.
- Review comments, suggestions and opinion should be expressed clearly with supporting arguments.
- Promptness is essential of our review process. We expect that if the reviewer is unable to review the paper or cannot meet the time deadlines, the reviewer should inform us and opt out of the peer review process.
- Reviewers should have no conflict of interest with respect to the submissions, authors, and/or the research funding agencies.
- Reviewers are also expected to point out latest and relevant published work if not cited in the submitted manuscripts.
- Confidentiality must be maintained for all articles submitted for review. This included comments, overviews, strengths and weaknesses, decisions regarding acceptability.

These guidelines and policies related to **AJER's** peer review process are clearly presented on the journal website as per COPE guidelines on Peer review process. Please see:

https://publicationethics.org/files/Principles_of_Transparency_and_Best_Practice_in_Scholarly_Publishingv3.pdf

5. Authorship and Contributorship

Any individual playing a role in research is eligible to be a contributor. Contributorship includes authorship as well because publication ethics demands that the contribution of each individual author should be specified when research is submitted for publication. There are different norms to define who should be listed as an author, some of which are following:

- One who makes a substantial contribution to the concept or design of a research work; or has contributed to the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of the research data; and/or
- One who has drafted the manuscript, or revised it critically and suggested important intellectual content; and
- One who prepares the final version to be published; and
- One who is accountable for all aspects of a research work and ensures that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

In addition, we encourage authors to list names(s) of individual(s) who assisted in the completion of the manuscript in the Acknowledgments section, to recognize their contribution. One of the authors should be the corresponding author who should handle all correspondences related to the manuscript, before, during and after the publication. Prior to the publication, the corresponding author should clearly state that s/he is given authority by all co-authors to act on their behalf in all matters pertaining to publication of the manuscript.

There exist extensive guidelines of COPE on Authorship and Contributorship, its definition, scope and even disputes related to authorship. Please see <https://publicationethics.org/authorship>. Our editors frequently refer to these guidelines whenever any authorship dispute escalates. This integrates us with industry established standards and achieve transparency.

In addition, we follow established and emerging industry standards to increase transparency in authorship (e.g., ORCID). We also support initiatives that enable transparency in authorship and Contributorship, such as CRediT taxonomy. If you wish to report any discrepancy in authorship and Contributorship, please contact us at email: publishingethics@aessweb.com

6. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as unattributed use of large portions of text and/or data or any previously published work without consent, credit, or acknowledgment and fraudulently passing it as one's own work. It may also include text(s), illustrations, musical quotations, extended mathematical derivations, computer codes, material downloaded from websites or drawn from manuscripts; published and unpublished material, including lectures, presentations etc. An author is alleged of plagiarism if there are act of minor copying of short phrases in discussions; or literal (word-for-word) copying of large parts from a published paper; or reproducing major parts of a previously published paper such as text, tables, and figures; or paraphrasing large texts without verbatim copying the text; or recycling author's own previously published text, termed as self-plagiarism, without citation of the prior work. COPE provides clear guidelines on processes to be followed to check plagiarism when detected before and after publication. Please see <https://publicationethics.org/files/plagiarism%20A.pdf>.

Besides, there are instructions how to check all submissions through appropriate plagiarism checking tools. We use plagiarism-checking software, CrossCheck, powered by iThenticate, for all manuscripts submitted for publication. This assists editors in identifying plagiarism in all submissions. Submissions containing suspected plagiarism, in whole or part, are rejected. If plagiarism is discovered post-publication, we can retract the article. We expect our readers, reviewers and editors to raise any suspicions of plagiarism, either by contacting the relevant editor or by emailing publicationethics@aessweb.com

7. Duplicate and Redundant Publication

Submitting a new manuscript containing the same hypotheses, data, discussion points, and/or conclusions as a previously published manuscript is called as duplicate publication. This is similar to plagiarism, but instead of copying phrases verbatim, the same data, images, and study hypothesis are replicated in another paper. The COPE classifies duplicate publications into major and minor offences. A major offence is defined as a duplicate publication based on the same dataset with identical findings and/or evidence that authors have sought to hide redundancy, e.g., by changing title or author order or not referring to previous papers. A minor offence, also referred as "salami slicing," is defined as a duplicate publication with some element of redundancy or legitimate repetition or reanalysis (e.g., subgroup/extended follow-up/repeated methods).

Please refer to COPE's definition of redundant publication, available at: <https://publicationethics.org/category/keywords/redundant-publication>

We do not support substantial overlap between publications, unless our editors recommend that it will strengthen the academic discourse and contribute to research. We publish only when we have clear approval from the original publisher while citing the original source. We expect our readers, reviewers and editors to raise any suspicions of duplicate or redundant publication, either by contacting the relevant editor or by emailing publicationethics@aessweb.com Such redundant publications are retracted as per the [COPE Flowcharts](https://publicationethics.org/guidance/Flowcharts) <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/Flowcharts>

8. Conflicts of Interest and Funding

Conflicts of interest, also known as competing interests, may be financial, personal, social or other interests that directly or indirectly influence the conduct of the author with respect to the manuscript submitted. Direct conflict

of interest occurs when authors are benefited in the form of stocks, patents, employment from the text/ content of the paper. Indirect conflict of interest are in the form of research grants, funds or honoraria etc received from the published content. The declaration of the conflict of interest is left to the discretion of the author who are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest that could interfere with the objectivity or integrity of a publication. We expect our readers, reviewers and authors to report any undisclosed conflict of interest for a work published or under consideration in our journal to our editor or email publicationethics@aessweb.com

9. Libel, Defamation and Freedom of Expression

Libel and slander are two infamous matters that affect a person's reputation and termed as defamation. Libel is written defamation, while slander is oral defamation. Some written transcripts or manuscripts submitted for publications also fall under the rubric of libel. When any editorial committee seeks to protect reputation or prevent any defamation to occur, it invariably is seen as infringement on freedom of expression.

Our journal considers freedom of expression as a right of the author but we do not support publication of false statements that can harm the reputation of individuals, groups, or organizations. Our legal team pays special attention on any kind of pre-publication libel reviews, or allegations of libel. We honor authors' freedom of expression and allow them to express their beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and emotions about different issues free from any censorship, provided they do not amount to libels or defamation.

10. Retractions, Corrections and Expressions of Concern

AJER addresses the retractions, corrections or expressions of concern in line with [COPE's Guidelines](#) available here <https://publicationethics.org/retraction-guidelines>
An article can be retracted if

- There is a clear evidence that the findings are unreliable, either as a result of miscalculation or experimental error, or as a result of fabrication or falsification
- It constitutes plagiarism
- Its contents are published without proper acknowledgement or disclosure to the editor, permission to republish, or justification
- Copyright has been infringed

Regarding corrections, if an error is committed inadvertently by the author, **AJER** issues a corrigendum or if the error is due to a member of Editorial committee, we issue an erratum. Our production unit can minor changes of typesetting or proofreading, but any substantive corrections are carried out in line with COPE's Retraction Guidelines.

AJER publishes Expressions of Concern if we identify well-founded concerns or suspicions and feel that readers should be made aware of such potentially misleading information. We follow the COPE guidelines to schedule expression of such concerns as stated in COPE's Retraction Guidelines. All such concerns include citation of the original article and explains the editor's concerns about its contents. Care is taken not to disturb its indexing and abstracting links and that they are accessible. In the end, if errors are detected, we encourage publication of corrections as well as retractions. In case of any enquiries, concerns or issues related to retractions, please contact us at email: publishingethics@aessweb.com

Reference

COPE (2019) COPE Retraction guidelines — English. <https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.4> Version 2: November 2019.
<https://publicationethics.org/retraction-guidelines>

11. Retractions Retractions Manipulation, Falsification and Fabrication

Image manipulation occurs when images or their embedded data are modified in such a fashion that images might misrepresent the results obtained from them. Unless there are legitimate reasons for modifying images, we do not expect authors to modify images as it might lead to falsification, fabrication, or misrepresentation of data findings.

Data falsification is the manipulation of research data, method or material, processes, findings and results with the intention of giving a false impression. Data fabrication is the intentional misrepresentation of research data by making-up findings, misreporting results.

AJER allows image manipulation where appropriate, but with the purpose to rectify images but not to the extent of falsification and fabrication. The authors are expected to declare where manipulations are made; and to supply original images on request. All policies and procedures to address issues related to image manipulation, data falsification and fabrication are dealt with COPE guidelines available here <https://publicationethics.org/retraction-guidelines>

12. Fraudulent Research and Research Misconduct

Fraudulent research is a violation of the standard code of conduct and publication ethics in scientific research. It is an intentional deception made for personal gain or to damage another individual, by intentionally falsifying and/or fabricating research data, and misleading reporting of the results.

Research misconduct includes plagiarism, misreporting research results, etc. besides fabrication and falsification of research data and findings. A negligent deviation from accepted practices and failure to follow established protocols also amounts to Research misconduct. It also includes intentional and unauthorized disclosure of research findings, materials, writings or devices used in research.

AJER emphasizes on the integrity of content. We refer to COPE guidelines and regulations: http://publicationethics.org/files/Code_of_conduct_for_journal_editors_Mar11.pdf and <https://publicationethics.org/files/u7141/1999pdf13.pdf> to investigate any potential fraudulence or research misconduct. In the event of any inadvertent slip, we immediately retract the published content.

13. Versions and Adaptations

One of the evidences of complying with COPE guidelines and publishing ethics is that **AJER** does not issue any different versions of our published content in different geographical, cultural, linguistics and environmental locations. Our authors are distributed across many geographical regions, languages and cultures, but we do not modify the published content to meet linguistic or ideological requirements of any region. Nor do we compromise with the quality, effectiveness or factual accuracy of the research content nor let it conflict with our Code of Ethics as specified in COPE guidelines: <https://publicationethics.org/files/u7141/1999pdf13.pdf>

14. Transparency

Transparency in research resides in truth and honesty in research publications. We expect authors to be transparent in their research data. Data transparency means the accessibility of data no matter where it is located or what application created it. Secondly, data transparency also requires the assurance that data is accurate and coming from authentic sources. Transparency in research also enables readers to utilize the data confidently to support their empirical research.

AJER adheres to [COPE's Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing](https://publicationethics.org/files/Principles_of_Transparency_and_Best_Practice_in_Scholarly_Publishing_v3.pdf) available here: https://publicationethics.org/files/Principles_of_Transparency_and_Best_Practice_in_Scholarly_Publishing_v3.pdf

15. Data and Supporting Evidence

In order to ensure trust, honesty and transparency of data, **AJER** expects authors to maintain accurate records of supporting evidence such as filled-in questionnaires, interview transcripts, codes, and other research material. At times, such data may be required to verify, and replicate new findings, and to support evidences on reasonable request. If allowed by the appropriate authorities and the funding agency, we encourage authors to submit research data in a suitable repository or a location, for sharing and further use by others; and/ or provide a data availability statement or a source where data can be found.

16. Integrity of Record

AJER maintains a track record of all our publications along with the metadata consisting of volume, issues and page numbers of each publication. It is our primary objective to first ensure that the metadata is accessible to all within a jurisdiction without violating the law of the land nor modifying the research content to suit the geographical, linguistic or cultural diversity. In the event of retraction or corrections, when we need to alter our publications, we preserve the indexing and accessing information as far possible. Thus, we keep the integrity of our meta records.

17. Fair Access

AJER believes in free and fair, low-cost access of all our digital content to researchers across all geographical regions globally. For this purpose, we organize events like seminars, webinars, conferences and participate in global access initiatives to ensure a wider accessibility of our open access published content. **AJER** also waives off APC for the authors belonging to low and middle-income countries who are unable to pay the APC

18. Marketing Communication

AJER utilize the social media platforms and other electronic media to disseminate our content and engage readers with our publications. We try to reach new readers through quick communication methods like emails, twitter and Facebook. Our Editorial board and reviewers are familiar with social media policies and practices and plan their advertising and marketing activities by adhering to norms and standards of the concerned regulatory body such as [Advertising Standards Authority's Guidance on the Marketing of Publications](#) (or equivalent bodies applicable to our global offices). Such communication for the purpose of marketing and publicity of the journal content is not at the expense of its integrity of content.

19. Advertising

AJER makes use of very specific, appropriate and only most essential advertising on our online publications. The logos of indexing bodies like Scopus, ERIC, WoS and others are shown to inform the readers of the indexing status of the journal. Such advertising is independent from what we publish and has no connection with contents of the manuscripts or with the with the themes of special issues.

We follow the Research Publishing Ethics Guidelines or the COPE Code of Ethics <https://publicationethics.org/files/u7141/1999pdf13.pdf> while we use the required and limited advertising. We also adhere to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) guidelines <https://www.asa.org.uk/resource/publications.html> for our data protection regulations, [Marketing of Publications](#), and our internal Compliance procedures.

20. PR / Media

The PR/ Media committee of **AJER** comprises editorial board members as well as a few authors who promote the journal among their academic colleagues in universities and institutions. For this purpose we follow the [Code of Conduct](#) of the concerned regulatory bodies including COPE guidelines <https://publicationethics.org/files/u7141/1999pdf13.pdf>. We strictly observe the norms and standards

when we need to issue press releases or other media communications in seminars and conferences. If our PR/Media activities concern our authors, editors or reviewers, we keep them informed about the media activity with their names mentioned. Our editors and peer reviewers who are involved in media or publicity related activities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with and follow the International Public Relations Association's (IPRA) Code of Conduct <https://www.ipra.org/member-services/code-of-conduct/>

21. Metrics, Usage and Reporting

AJER complies with the industry standards and the [Code of Ethics](#) while reporting metrics, statistics and content usage (e.g. citations). We ensure that our reporting of metrics and statistics are correct, accurate and no malicious infringement has been committed and remains compliant with the industry standard and the COUNTER Code of Practice Release 5 <https://www.projectcounter.org/code-of-practice-five-sections/abstract/>.

We also share our metrics with third parties, including commercial services, who provide users and readers with metrics illustrating our impact factor, and other such metrics. We appreciate the support provided to us by third parties such as [Crossref](#), and other indexing bodies (through the provision of data, access or fees) that have actively facilitated our work of disseminating our metrics and data statistics.