

Research Misconduct Policy

This policy applies to all research articles submitted for publication. It covers all authors, reviewers, editors, and other individuals involved in the publication process.

We follow the Research Misconduct Policy from The Office of Research Integrity, US Dept of Health and Human Services. Research misconduct is defined as-Fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.

- (a) Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
- (b) Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- (c) Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.
- (d) Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion

To report suspicions of editorial misconduct, individuals are encouraged to contact the editorial office. The following guidelines outline the process for submitting allegations of research conduct:

- Complaints can pertain to published research, as well as concerns regarding the publisher, editor, or reviewer.
- Complaints should be thoroughly substantiated with relevant data. Allegations of plagiarism must clearly specify how the accused article has copied from the original source. Unsubstantiated complaints will not be entertained.
- Avoid submitting repetitive complaints. Upon receiving a complaint, an acknowledgment, along with details about our investigation and remediation process, will be provided, including a timeline. Follow-up is recommended only if the provided timeline is not met.

In evidence of fabrication, falsification and plagiarism, the editorial office reserves the right to communicate necessary information to relevant research bodies and institutions

The process for investigating research misconduct is outlined below-

- **Reporting Research Misconduct:** Anyone who becomes aware of potential research misconduct related to a manuscript submitted for publication should report it to the Editor-in-Chief or the designated Research Misconduct Officer. Reports should be made in writing and include detailed information and evidence supporting the allegations.
- **Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct:** Upon receiving an allegation of research misconduct, editorial office will conduct a thorough and impartial investigation. The investigation may involve gathering relevant evidence, consulting with experts, and interviewing involved parties. The identities of those involved in the investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible.
- **Resolution of Allegations:** If the investigation substantiates allegations of research misconduct, appropriate action will be taken. This may include rejection of the manuscript, retraction of the published article, notification of relevant stakeholders (e.g., funding

agencies, institutions), and imposition of sanctions against individuals found responsible for misconduct. In the event of suspected research misconduct pre-publication, both the editorial office and peer reviewers possess the explicit right and obligation to promptly notify the author. The author is required to address the concerns through revisions as advised. Non-compliance with the prescribed revisions will lead to the outright rejection of the manuscript.

In evidence of research misconduct post-publication, we will investigate the matter to the best of our ability. We will retract the article if we see evidence of-

- Research findings being deemed unreliable due to substantial errors, whether stemming from significant mistakes (e.g., miscalculations or experimental errors) or deliberate actions such as fabrication (e.g., data) or falsification (e.g., image manipulation).
 - Evidence of plagiarism is found
 - The findings have been previously published elsewhere without proper attribution, disclosure to the editor, permission for republication, or adequate justification, constituting cases of redundant publication.
 - Unauthorized use of material or data is present in the manuscript.
 - Serious legal issues, such as copyright infringement, libel, or privacy violations, are identified.
 - The research reported in the manuscript is deemed unethical.
 - The publication has occurred solely based on a compromised or manipulated peer review process.
 - The author(s) failed to disclose a significant competing interest (conflict of interest) that, in the editor's view, would have unduly influenced interpretations of the work or recommendations by editors and peer reviewers.
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- **Protection of Whistleblowers:** Editorial Office is committed to protecting individuals who report allegations of research misconduct in good faith. Retaliation against whistleblowers is strictly prohibited, and any instances of retaliation will be addressed promptly and appropriately.
 - **Appeals Process:** Individuals accused of research misconduct have the right to appeal the findings and decisions of the investigation. The appeals process will be fair, transparent, and impartial, and it may involve reconsideration of the case by an independent committee or authority such as WAME
 - **Communication and Transparency:** Editorial Office will communicate openly and transparently about allegations of research misconduct, the investigation process, and the outcomes of investigations. Information related to research misconduct cases may be published as appropriate, ensuring confidentiality is maintained where necessary.
 - **Compliance with Policies and Guidelines:** This research misconduct policy is aligned with relevant guidelines and recommendations, including those provided by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and other authoritative bodies.

- **Review and Revision:** This research misconduct policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Feedback from stakeholders, including authors, reviewers, and editors, will be solicited to identify areas for improvement.