

Scholarly Publication Ethics

Practical problems from the South African experience

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AOSIS (est. 1999)

SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

Peer reviewed



eLearning

moodlepartners

AOSIS – OA Journals

37

Economic and Management Sciences

Health Sciences

Humanities

Science, Engineering and Technology

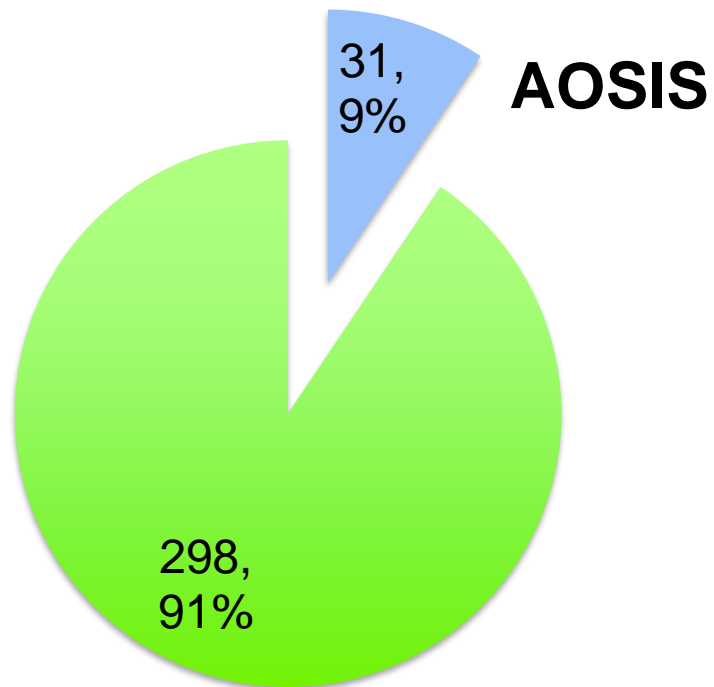
Theological and Religious Studies

Veterinary Sciences

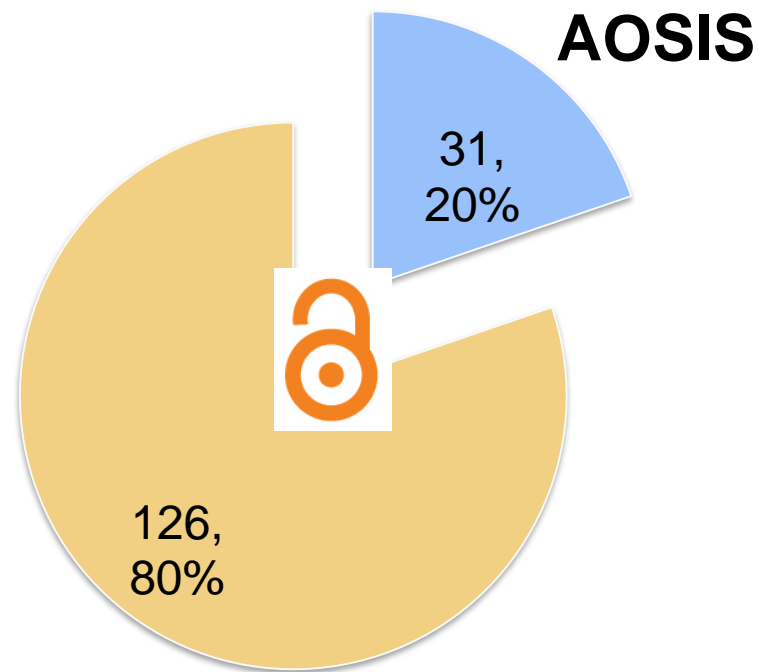
Scopus indexed= 49%

Scholarly journals - 2016

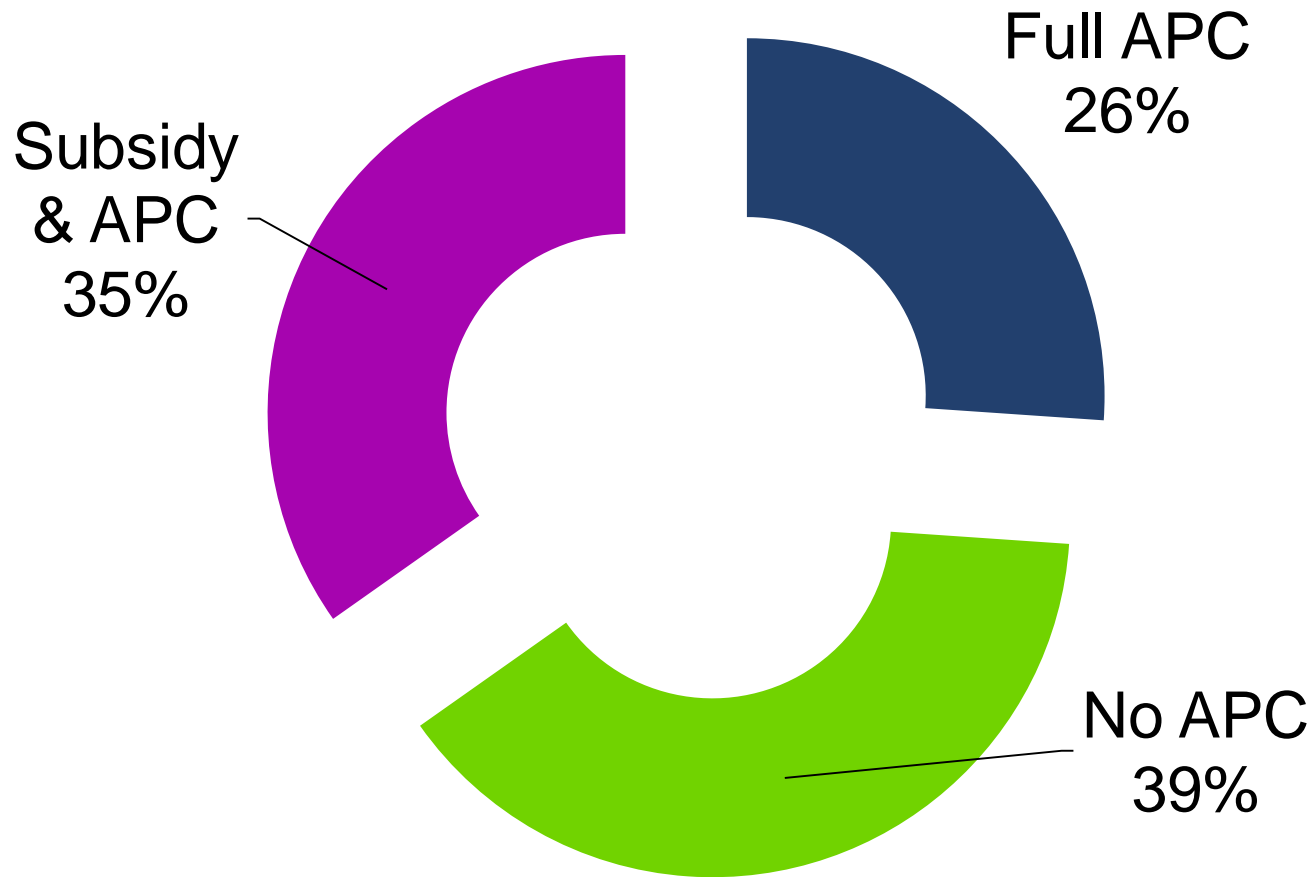
DHET(N= 329)



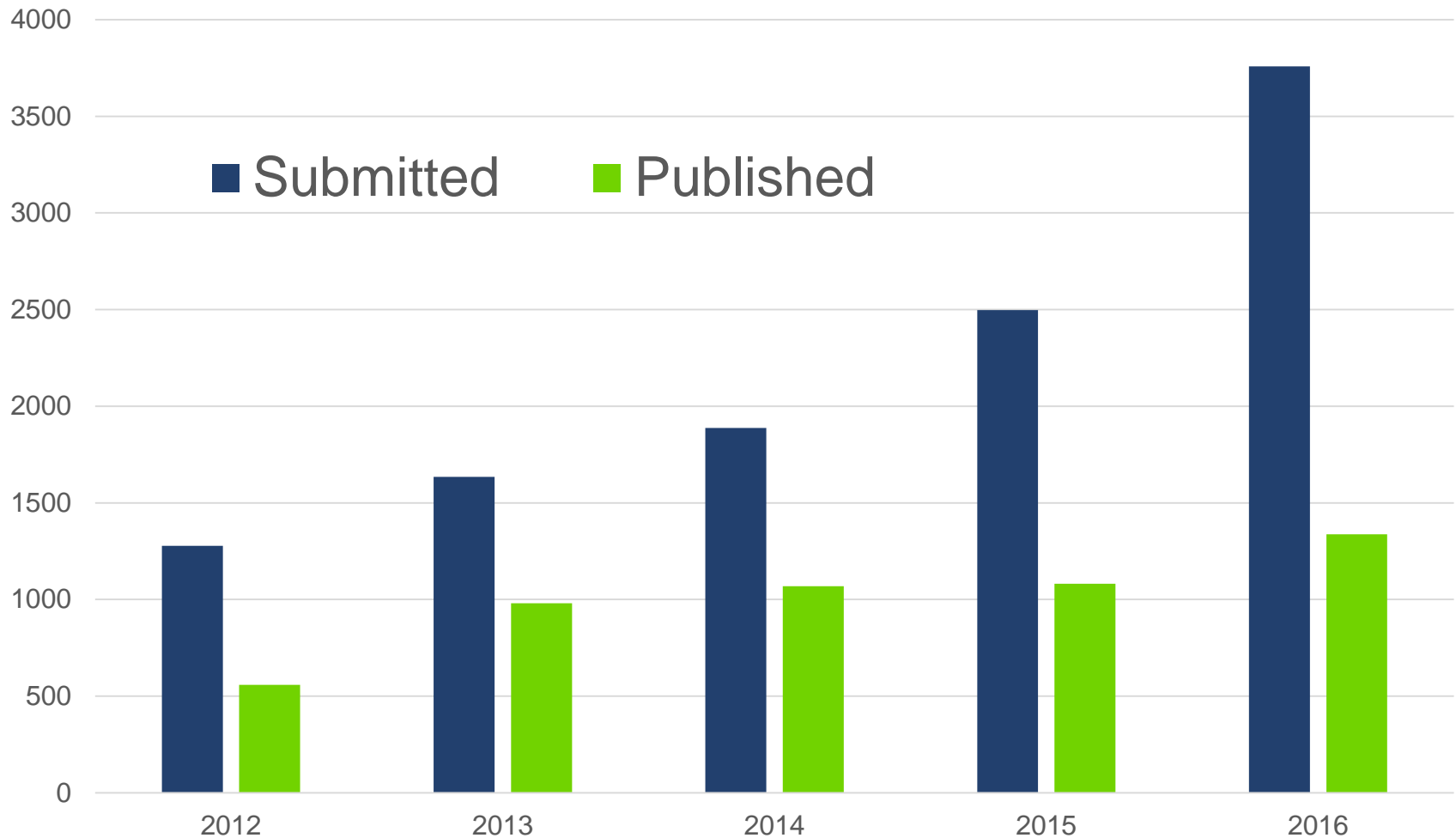
Open Access (N=172)



AOSIS Journals - business models



AOSIS journal publishing output (-2016)



64% rejection rate

Publication Ethics

- **rules of conduct** generally agreed upon when publishing results of scientific research or other scholarly work.
 - *www.psychologydictionary.org*
- **standards of expected ethical behavior** for all parties involved in the act of publishing
 - *www.elsevier.com*

Parties involved

- Title owners (societies, universities)
- Publishers
- Editors
- Reviewers
- Copyeditors
- Authors
- Employers (universities)
- Funders (e.g. NRF)
- Regulatory bodies (e.g. HPCSA)

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)

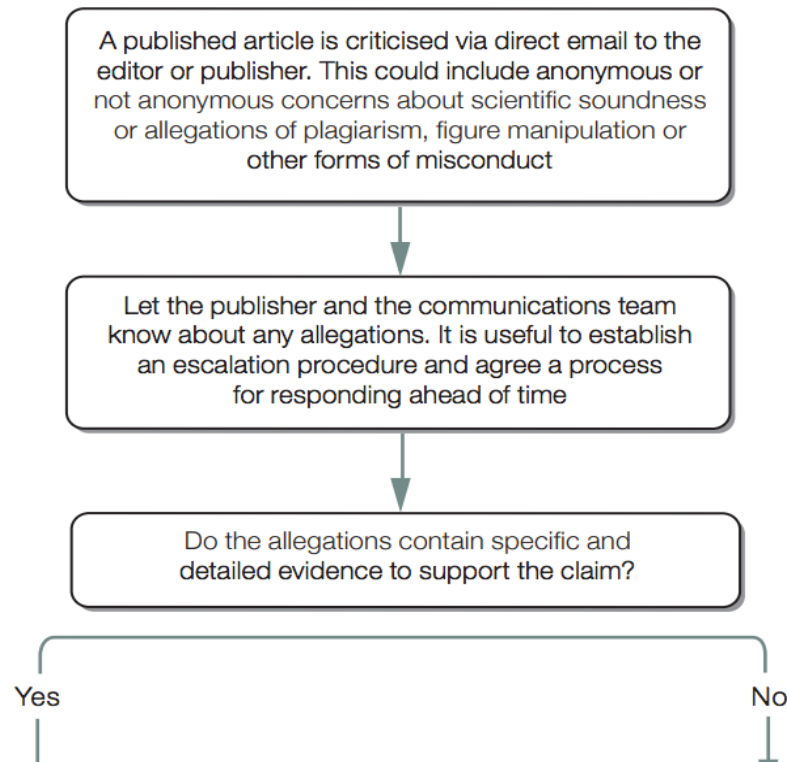


- Established in 1997
- More than 10,000 members (editors)
- Advice to editors & publishers how to handle cases of research and publication misconduct
- Code of conduct & best practice for editors
- Guidelines & flowcharts
- Forum for discussion of cases for editors
- Education for editors (e-Learning)

www.publicationethics.org

COPE flowcharts

How to respond to whistle blowers when concerns are raised directly



Note

The tone of the allegations may be aggressive or personal. Respond politely; don't get drawn into personal exchanges

Note

Sometimes the whistle blower may prefer to remain anonymous. It is important not to try to "out" people who wish to be anonymous

COPE classification

- Authorship
- Conflict of interest
- Consent for publication
- Contributorship
- Copyright
- Correction of the literature
- Data
- Editorial independence
- Funding/sponsorship
- Metrics
- Misconduct/questionable behaviour



COPE classification

- Mistakes
- Peer review
- Plagiarism
- Questionable/unethical research
- Redundant/duplicate publication
- Whistleblowers



COPE cases database

- **Questionable/unethical research** (173)
- **Misconduct/questionable behaviour** (122)
- **Redundant/duplicate publication** (120)
- **Authorship** (117)
- Data (115)
- **Correction of the literature** (109)
- Conflict of interest (66)
- **Plagiarism** (66)
- Peer review (65)
- Miscellaneous (54)



“Unethical research”

- **SA Journal of Radiology (2016)**
 - Letter from colleague complaining about “unethical research”, no consent, no ethical approval
 - Did also not agree with the findings (own findings)
 - Knew the authors
- **Outcome**
 - COPE flowchart - “whistleblower”
 - Complaint forwarded to authors
 - Both complaint and response to EB members for input
 - Corrigendum: Ethical approval omitted, consent
 - Ethical approval letter now mandatory for health science journals

“Unknown author, fake study”

- **African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine (2017)**
- **Telephonic complaint (asks anonymity):**
 - “This study never took place. The author does not belong to the department and never had access to the data published. The data published were wrong and misleading and very far from the actual situation. A lot has been published on maternal mortality from authentic sources/authors who are part of the Obstetrics & gynecology department. The author of this study is not known to anyone in the department.”
- **Action:**
 - Letter to institution to confirm existence of author, and author to reply to allegation – SILENCE so far

Redundant/duplicate publication

- **Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review (APSDPR) - 2017**
 - Article accepted after peer review
 - Similarity report 4%
 - Authors non-responsive in copyediting, suspicious references
 - Follow-up lead to discovery of identical article in "*Online Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences (OJAMSS)*" – March 2017 (Not in DOAJ)
- **Outcome (so far)**
 - *Author and editor informed*
 - *Author withdraws, editor decline article*
 - *Article was submitted to 2 journals simultaneously, "see which is first"*

Redundant/duplicate publication

- **African Journal of Primary Health Care & FM–2010**
 - Prolific author & RSA scholar submitted manuscript
 - Signed journal declaration
 - Reviewer picked up similar article in **SA Family Practice** (no similarity software available)
- **Outcome**
 - Author cannot offer acceptable explanation (mistake)
 - **SAMJ/Am J Forensic Med Pathol had similar case with author
 - Manuscript rejected, plus all other in pipeline (both).
 - Author banned from both journals
 - Employer informed – disciplinary hearing

Why is duplicate publication a problem?

- **Adds redundant material** to an already extensive amount of literature
- Inappropriately **influences meta-analysis** by increasing number of results
- **Wastes time** for editors, peer reviewers, scientists, readers by reading and reviewing material that is redundant
- **Wastes journal resources** by using print or web space that should be used for original articles
- Uses **resources to investigate** a case of duplicate publication
- **Copyright law** infringement
- RSA: May result in **double DHET subsidy (fraud)**

Text-recycling from an unpublished collaborative paper

- **South African Journal of Communication Disorders (2016)**
 - Official complaint from partner institution
 - Partners agreed that individual publications would wait for joint publication
 - Authors “jumped the gun”, demands retraction
- **Outcome**
 - Used text stems largely from the methods and ethical consideration section from unpublished research report
 - Original research
 - No duplication occurred, need proper attribution
 - Corrigendum to set the record straight, cite report
 - Complainant advised to contact partner for resolution of contractual dispute

Plagiarism/Peer review misconduct

- **HTS Theological Studies (?2014)**

- Complaint from PhD candidate that parts of an article uses findings of his PhD thesis (not graduated yet)
- Proper attribution
- Author was an external examiner of the PhD thesis in question

- **Outcome**

- Complainant would not accept situation, may impact on promotion, threatened with legal action
- Article retracted (author did not agree)
- Author then asks for removal of retraction notice to protect his reputation
- Decline request, to protect publication record integrity

Authorship

Individuals are entitled to authorship of a manuscript when they meet **all** these criteria:

1. Made a **substantial contribution** to conception and design, *or* acquisition of data, *or* analysis and interpretation of data.
2. **Drafted** the manuscript or **critically revised** it for important intellectual content;
3. **Approved the final version** to be published.

Only acquiring funding, collecting data, or generally supervising the research group do not justify authorship.

DHET policies on authorship



- DHET subsidy rewards **institutions**
- Use **author affiliation** in publication
- “assumes that this is where research was carried out”
- Disputes to be settled between institutions
- Allows for “visiting scholars or fellows and retired academics”

Students/supervisors

- If a publication draws substantially from a **student's dissertation or thesis** then that student should preferably be listed as the ***principal author***.
- The **supervisor** of such a student should be involved as ***co-author***.
- If any of them **explicitly decline** any of the implied co-author responsibilities, their role must be outlined in 'acknowledgements' and they must be informed to avoid any misunderstandings.
- Contributions that do not meet authorship criteria should be mentioned in the '**Acknowledgements**' section of the manuscript. This includes the involvement of a professional writer.

Dealing with authorship disputes

- **Very common** request for corrections
- Before vs after publication (corrigendum)
- COPE flowchart
- **ALL listed authors must agree to any change**
- Prevention: declaration of all authors' contribution with submission

Correcting the record

- Minor (spelling, etc)
- Erratum
- Corrigendum
- Addendum
- Expression of concern (temporarily)
- Retraction

*"AOSIS is committed to **preserving the historical accuracy of all its publications**. In principle, no published work should be altered or removed from the print or electronic AOSIS platforms after it has been published."*

Questionable (predatory) publishers

- **Renders no value adding services**
 - Charge APC's
 - Beall's List ("blacklist") - stopped
- **Journal hi-jacking**
 - **Bothalia** - hard copy only, in name change process
 - Operator registered "bothlia.com" and similar domains
 - Setup fake website (very poor quality)
 - Spam marketing
 - Charges APC's, but not mentioned!
 - Long legal process to get those domains back
 - NB: register all domains, don't change name!

“Bona Fide” scholarly journals

- Listed in **major indexing services**: WoS, Scopus, IBSS*, ScieloSA
- **DHET list** (RSA journals)
- Listed in:
 - **Directory of Open Access Journals – DOAJ**
 - (www.doaj.org.za)
 - “whitelist” of 9,735 open access journals
- Member of:
 - **Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association – OASPA**
 - Voluntary association, set industry standards
 - <https://oaspa.org/membership/members/>



C O P E

COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing

Introduction

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA), and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) are scholarly organizations that have seen an increase in the number, and broad range in the quality, of membership applications. Our organizations have collaborated in an effort to identify principles of transparency and best practice for scholarly publications and to clarify that these principles form part of the criteria on which membership applications will be evaluated.

These criteria are largely derived from those developed by the Directory of Open Access Journals. Note that additional membership criteria may also be used by each of the scholarly organizations. The organizations will not share information about applications received. We do not intend to develop or publish a list of publishers or journals that failed to demonstrate they met the criteria for transparency and best practice.

UPDATE: This is the second version of a work in progress (published June 2015); the first version was posted in January 2014. We encourage its wide dissemination and continue to welcome feedback on the general principles and the specific criteria. Background on the organizations is below.

<https://publicationethics.org>



Retracting a paper from questionable journal

- **Scenario:**

- Article published in “questionable journal” and afterwards it is “discovered” journal has “bad reputation” (predatory?). Author would like to withdraw article and publish elsewhere.

- **Questions:**

- Why did the author not do proper due diligence?
- Did author transfer copyright to journal/title owner?
- Will publisher remove article from journal website and the record?
- Will any reputable publisher accept such manuscript for consideration if the true facts are known?
- Implications for author if other (first, duplicate) publication is discovered?



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