

Retraction Notices are Increasing in Scientific Journals!

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This editorial begins with sighting an example of an editorial published in Nature Medicine in 2009. The title “The insider’s guide to plagiarism” has explored the possible causes of scientific fraud. Thus, deserves a special attention in science in modern time. The paper discussed that reduced research budgets are likely the key factors affecting research. The issue is supposed to be more critical for the struggling scientists who are unable to secure a share out of the allocated budget [1]. Recently, another paper highlighted the trend of claiming credit for work that is not one’s own in various academic institutions worldwide [2]. “An analysis is presented, that showed the effects that may arise from metrics-based assessments of research when credit for an author’s outputs (chiefly publication) is given to an institution that did not support the research but which subsequently employs the author” says the paper [2]. An article [3] entitled “The trouble with retractions” has emphasized that, “a surge in withdrawn papers clearly highlighting weaknesses in the system for handling them”. The paper further reports that, “In the early 2000s, only about 30 retraction notices appeared annually. This year, the web of science is on track to index more than 400.....”

When the topic i.e., retraction of research paper in scientific Journals, was searched in SciFinder. The topic was resulted with a good number of result count dealing with the topic appeared in; either closely associated with one another or were present anywhere in the reference. In the Year 2011, relatively good number of notices was seen in different Journals stating different reasons on their retraction. “The retraction has been made as the research was performed during authors Ph.D. work and the article was published without acknowledging the scientific contribution of author’s Ph.D. supervisor and principal investigator. The paper was published without the supervisor’s knowledge and consent” says Journal of Polymer Science [4]. A total of six retractions were seen in Journal of Immunology in year 2011 followed by ten retractions in 2010. The most influential retractions were authored by Bulanova in poor supervision of Silvia Bulfone-Paus, who had published two papers in 2001 [5] and 2003 [6], respectively. The Journal [7] wrote that, “The first two authors declined to sign this Letter of Retraction. The key experiments of these figures were recently reproduced. Although the results confirmed the experimental data and the conclusions drawn in the publication, all the other authors retract this paper in its entirety and regret any adverse consequences that may have resulted from the paper’s publication”. In a similar incident, Bulanova et al. [6] publication was found to be falsified when they were asked to retract their paper published in The EMBO Journal [8]. In the year 2010, retraction notice published in J of Hazardous Materials [9] says that, “It duplicates significant parts of a paper that had already appeared in Chemical Engineering Journal, 2010, doi:10.1016/j.cej.2009.10.051.” and “This represents an abuse of the scientific publishing system and a clear violation of publishing ethics”. The Phytotherapy Research [10] has also published a notice entitled, ‘Scientific deception: retraction of a fraudulent paper’, which says that, “We the editors of the International Journal of Cardiology and Phytotherapy Research regretfully report a case of scientific fraud. We have been made aware that two manuscripts published around the same time contain similar figures and tables”.

Elsevier in one of his biggest move has announced to retract about eleven research papers published in different Elsevier Journals

from Brazilian research group led by Claudio Airoidi stating the Elsevier policy behind article withdrawal [11]. Later, Journal of Colloid and Interface Science in 2011 has published retraction notice incorporating all eleven research papers to bring this fraud publicly [12]. Theoretically, retraction notices refers withdrawing a paper from the scientific literature to avoid spread of the falsified data. However, such papers are reportedly being cited just as often and the rates have not improved much. When I login to web of science (Thomson Reuters) to get citation information of Claudio Airoidi’s falsified research papers, I found that one of his paper was cited 35 times and an overall 37 times [13]. Interestingly, even after publication of retraction notice [11], one of his students whom he wrote many papers is still citing the work in a recent publication [14]. Most of the above listed retractions were appeared after many years of publication of the original paper. Since, most of the Journals have long queue of papers or backlog for publication. In addition, features like ‘articles in press’ is valuable up to some extent to combat this menace. Moreover, the backlog especially for fraudulent research papers is keeping retraction process in hibernation. Further, the situation may be more alleviated when we will witness retraction notices even in ‘in press’ stage. Simply publishing a retraction notice will not serve the purpose and restriction on publications must be imposed on such workers. Thus, Journals and publishers should take the necessary corrective measures to tackle this alarming situation.

Renowned publishers like Omics Publishing Group [15] in collaboration with CrossRef, an official DOI or digital object identifier registration agency, not-for-profit network founded on publisher collaboration has made reference linking throughout online including journals, books, and others. Elsevier has developed detection software for plagiarism detection and initiated a service called CrossCheck [16], which will help in verifying the originality of published works. American Institute of Physics [17] and Food Chemistry [18] have implemented CrossCheck feature in their online submission and editorial system. Why most of scholars don’t know much about recent updates of a published paper because they just download digital PDF formatted copies and never consult the original source thereafter. Hence, to keep the readers up to date, a system called CrossMark™ identification service is being developed. It provides scientists, the information on most recent updates such as corrections, retractions and reliability of the document etc. This feature will be supported by a CrossMark logo on the PDF and HTML of each document [19]. Alternatively, publishers should also encourage Journals to make such retraction notices free excess for the readers so that such paper citations must be discouraged in future.

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