



REVIEW ARTICLE

FROM ACCEPTANCE TO DISAPPOINTMENT: A REFLECTION ON EDITORIAL ETHICS, APC PRESSURES, AND REGIONAL BIAS IN SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING

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ABSTRACT

Systemic challenges affecting authors' rights, equity, and information dissemination, particularly for Global South researchers, are becoming more prevalent in academic publishing. It was my experience that a manuscript accepted and billed with a full Article Processing Charge (APC) was unexpectedly lowered to a Short Communication without author consent. Regional biases devalue non-Western contributions to global science, as justified by "local interest". Unfair publishing practices literature supports editorial ethics, APC pressures, and regional bias issues. The piece urgently asks for openness, ethical accountability, and inclusive publishing reforms.

KEYWORDS

editorial ethics, APC bias, global south publishing inequity

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the prestige-driven and revenue-oriented academic publication paradigm has increased attention over ethical practices, particularly those that marginalise developing region scholars. The existing editorial system is flawed, as shown by my experience with an international environmental publication that accepted my work with an Article Processing Charge (APC) request and then categorised it as a Short Communication without sufficient disclosure. Though unique, this event illustrates a larger dilemma affecting scientific publishing transparency, trust, and fairness.

2. EDITORIAL ETHICS

Journals must be honest, fair, and academically rigorous to uphold editorial ethics, which go beyond plagiarism and authorship integrity. However, editorial biases continue, favouring favourable outcomes and publications from Western institutions or renowned research centres (Matias-Guiu and García-Ramos, 2011). These approaches distort scientific discourse and ignore Global South contributions.

Even though worldwide editorial groups now encourage transparency in peer review and authorship, unconsented article reclassification—like mine—violates editorial duty (Gasparyan et al., 2018). The journal's choice to lower my work after asking APC payment was not stated on the decision letter's main page, undermining author autonomy and trust. These judgements should be fair and require author agreement, especially when they effect publication status and cost. These ethical violations undermine peer-reviewed publications and require stronger editorial responsibility (Yom, 2023).

3. APC PRESSURES

APCs are standard in open-access publication. They maintain editorial operations but threaten equity. When APCs exceed €800, authors from low-income institutions or countries with poorer research funding confront insurmountable barriers. Financial gatekeeping is especially painful when content kind or visibility is decreased without consultation, as in my situation.

APCs vary by discipline, journal, and institution, revealing a structural stratification that favours wealthy authors and excludes others from the global knowledge ecosystem (Jain et al., 2021; Yom, 2023). To reduce the research gap, community-led platforms, waivers, and funder-supported open access must be adopted (Beasley, 2016).

4. REGIONAL BIAS IN PUBLISHING

My article devaluation was justified by "local interest"—a prevalent and pernicious regional bias. Regardless of scientific rigour or worldwide application, "non-mainstream science countries" research is typically considered parochial (Gasparyan et al., 2017, 2018). This reasoning fosters epistemic injustice by determining significance by geographic origin, ignoring environmental, health, and social issues in locations that need scholarly attention most.

Predatory editing services and inefficient publishing thrive in fragile academic institutions due to regional prejudice, reinforcing inequalities (Gasparyan et al., 2018). Regional and global editorial organisations must impose transparent, inclusive standards and elevate research from all regions on merit, not location.

5. CONCLUSION

Having a manuscript degraded post-acceptance without agreement, despite full APC payment, is more than simply a personal disappointment; it reflects a dysfunctional publishing system with editorial opacity, financial hurdles, and geographic discrimination. Reform must be systemic. Publishers must make ethical, transparent, and author-rights-respecting editorial judgements regardless of origin. The academic community must demand equitable, inclusive, merit-based knowledge distribution, not money or geography. Do you agree with me.

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