Publication Ethics and KODISA Journals

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to identify the most common misconducts in publication ethics, to demonstrate KODISA journals' management of the misconducts, and to share the findings with future and potential authors of Journal of Research and Publication Ethics (JRPE).   **Research design, data and methodology:** This is an analytical study that explores and examines research and publication ethics and misconducts. **Results:** Based on literature review, major publication misconducts that many academic journals had to contend with over the years encompass unethical authorship, including ghost, guest, and gift authorships, data falsification and fabrication, plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, submission and publication fraud (multiple submission and publication), and potential conflicts of interest. **Conclusions:** KODISA and its journals have strived and done great work in making the journals transparent and in combatting the issues associated with plagiarism, including self-plagiarism. However, it seems there is no mechanism to detect or deter unethical authorship, conflicts of interest, and fabrication and falsification misconducts.   The inception of JRPE signifies how KODISA and its journals continuously view research and publication ethics as their foremost important factor in maintaining and improving the academic journals.   The future research and scholastic manuscripts of JRPE could provide necessary and updated information about research and publication ethics, practices, and misconducts.

Keywords: KODISA Journals, Publication Ethics, Publication Misconducts, Journal of Research and Publication Ethics (JRPE)

JEL Classification Code: Y2, Y8, Y9.

1. Introduction

Ethics in research and publication has been one of the most significant factors for development and dissemination of knowledge. Disseminating accurate, validated, and reliable scientific research data and information are important, especially when there is a public health crisis such as COVID 19 Pandemic because the research data is the key to timely respond to public health emergencies (Smith, Upshur, & Ezekiel, 2020). Since 1999, Korea Distribution Science Association (KODISA) and its journals and editors have placed great effort in making sure that their journals are transparent, reliable, and academically and scholarly sound. Their efforts have led them to receive Korea National Research Foundation Grant to research, publish, and share the issues associated with research and publication.

Early 2020, KODISA and its board members unanimously voted for launching a new academic journal, Journal of Research and Publication Ethics (JRPE), to focus on research and publication ethics. The inception of JRPE is not only important to KODISA and its journals to maintain ethical research and publication practices but also necessary for academic journals, in general, to foster an ethical research and publication environment in Korea and Asia. Although many journals, conferences, and academic associations have continued to discuss and resolve research and publication misconducts and issues over the years, the

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cases of research and publication misconducts and issues are on the rise (Sathyamurthy, 2019). Moreover, it is extremely difficult to find a journal that focuses strictly on research and publication ethics. The only foreseeable issue for JRPE is to have and publish the adequate number of manuscripts that support the content of the journal and provide and share their manuscripts with the public.

The purpose of this paper is to identify the most common misconducts in publication ethics, to demonstrate how KODISA journals have managed these misconducts, and to share the findings with the future and potential authors of JRPE.

2. Publication Ethics Literature

Academic journals and their editors published their research and publication ethical practices, procedures, cases, and guidelines in their editorial reviews and analyses. The findings of these manuscripts identify and describe specific misconducts in research and publication and recommend different strategies to deter misconducts. These articles suggest that publication misconducts will continue to occur, and academic journals must take appropriate actions to deter misconducts and unethical behaviors.

Werner (2016) briefly described the progress of publication ethics of Human Resource Development Quarterly (HRDQ) and delineated how becoming a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) helped HRDQ to improve publication ethics. Brown (2017) also suggested that being a member of COPE guided the Financial Analysts Journal to address all aspects publication ethics and manage ethical misconducts. Werner (2016) specifically described two cases that are considered as misconducts of publication ethics. The first case was about failure to cite properly, a self-citation error in this case, but this misconduct was corrected by the author later. The second case was about submitting a research work at two different international conferences. The author believed that presenting and sharing a research work at an academic conference to seek feedback to improve the research work for publication was appropriate, but presenting and sharing same or similar research work at different academic conferences was an unethical behavior by the author.

The analysis of Foo and Wilson (2010), "An Analysis on the Research Ethics Cases Managed by the Committee on Publication Ethics between 1997 – 2010," shows how the COPE adopted and established an appropriate research and publication ethics guidelines to prevent and manage research misconducts; yet, there is no sign of diminishing misconducts. Foo and Wilson have extracted a total of 408 ethical cases from COPE and divided the cases into six different categories: plagiarism/copyright, authorship,

conflicts of interest, redundant publication, unethical research practices, and peer review issues. They found 49 different ethical implications from the extracted cases and about 47% of the total cases with multiple ethical implications. Availability of online published articles might be the reason for small fluctuations in the number of cases with redundant publication, peer review issues, and plagiarism and copyright issues.   The other ethical implication categories were relatively constant, except the category of unethical research practices.

Foo and Wilson (2010) have also indicated that the increasing trend of COPE membership could provide a great awareness of research and publication ethics and deter unethical behaviors. Foo and Wilson anticipate that there are areas in which COPE can improve its services by sharing verified offenders with publishers and editors to make it easier to implement article retractions. Although COPE does great work to investigate research and publication misconducts, it is extremely difficult to discover and verify multiple submissions and redundant publications. As such, they have concluded that bilateral efforts between editors and COPE can reduce the number of research and publication misconducts.

Sathyamurthy (2019) in his article, "General Editorial on Publication Ethics," indicated that the three major forms of scientific misconducts are fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. He further indicated that fabrication and falsification can be detected by the rigorous peer review process, but plagiarism is extremely difficult to discover. The rapid advancement in technology, including the internet, made it easier to detect plagiarism including self-plagiarism, but there is no software or technology that detects plagiarism completely. He stated Indian Academy of Science developed appropriate measures to investigate and penalize suspected plagiarism cases, including informing the suspected author's employers and research funding sources.

Safa's work, "Ethics in Publication: To Be Practiced or Not to Be," focused specifically on the role of authors, editors, and reviewers in publication ethics (2012). Safa examined authorship, plagiarism and consequences, and interaction ethics. Safa suggested that authorship should be decided based on contribution to research or scholarly work, and any co-authorship should be based on the real contribution, not dishonest co-authorship, e.g., co-authorship based on personal relationship or official obligations. Merely reviewing a manuscript and providing shallow feedback should not be considered as the real contribution, and this type of authorship misconduct happens between graduate and post-graduate students and their supervising professors. In terms of plagiarism and consequences, Safa suggested that the rapid advancement of technology and information systems fostered

texoplagirism (plagiarizing texts) to proliferate, especially using internet to download and copy necessary texts.

Safa believes interaction ethics among authors, editors, and reviewers is important in the publication process, and he identifies and describes four complexes during publication process, racial complex, over-confidence complex, professional-pride complex, and ego complex (ROPE). He states that the racial complex ruins publication activities because there are some people focusing on who and where they come from rather than focusing on the merit of the research work. Over-confidence complex happens between authors and reviewers/editors where some reviewers and editors believe that their knowledge is superior to anyone else, therefore undermining the knowledge of researchers or authors. Professional-pride complex occurs when a superior of or senior member of the author directs or influence the publication process that is not what the original author intended to do. Eco complex exists when someone who is senior to reviewers and editors influence publication activities.

Although Smith, Upshur, and Ezekiel (2020) have specifically focused on conducting research and publication ethics during times of public health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, their five principles of publication ethics are very relevant and applicable to the contemporary publication practices, scientific accuracy, safeguarding of social values, protection of participants and affected communities, transparency, and accountability.

Sengupta and Honavar (2017), in their special editorial 'Publication Ethics,' have developed a publication ethics checklist and discussed the items in the checklist: approval and consent, data accuracy falsification and fabrication, plagiarism and self-plagiarism, submission fraud, ethics of authorship, and conflicts of interest. They believe that publication ethics started from obtaining institutional ethics approval and informed consent from the study participants. Data manipulation and falsification occur when a researcher uses data that is not generated for his research (fabrication), applies that data for the research by manipulating the data (falsification). Editors and reviewers can request the original data if they are suspicious about the research data. They suggest that most common form of research and publication misconduct is plagiarism, where a research uses work by someone else without giving a credit or acknowledgement or obtaining consent, and self-plagiarism is when an author uses his/her previous work without proper citation.

Sengupta and Honavar (2017) believe double or simultaneous submission to different academic journals should be considered unethical behavior, and authors should submit their article to one journal and wait for evaluation and decision before submitting the same article

to another journal. Duplicate publication happens when an author submits a new research work, but the new manuscript includes same research methodology and outcomes. This practice is very similar to self-plagiarism but different in terms of using the same data, analysis, and findings instead of copying and pasting phrases verbatim. Some authors cite their previous work, self-citation, to increase the total number of citations, and there is no mechanism to detect this type of unethical behavior. Sengupta and Honavar (2017) also suggest that authors should carefully follow authorship criteria and guidelines to list authors on their manuscript. They identified three major misconducts with authorship, ghost authors, gift authorship, and guest authorship. They define ghost authors as ones with significant contribution to research but not listed as authors on the manuscript. Guest authors are ones with high profile and reputation in the field to improve the chances of the manuscript to be accepted, and gift authors are those listed as authors because of their institutional leadership positions but without any real or significant contribution to research. An example of conflicts of interest is when authors promote ideas, products, services, or organizations through their research work to gain self-benefits, e.g., monetary, promotion, and other personal and social benefits.

In his article, "Scientific Ethics and Publishing Conduct," Lenz (2014) indicate that fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, and any misconducts that fail to meet research and publication ethical guidelines are considered as scientific misconducts and should be dealt with carefully, fairly, and seriously. Furthermore, multiple publication, dissection of results, development of hypotheses after the analysis of data, nondisclosure of potential conflicts of interest, and ghost and gift authorship are ethically questionable research practices that need to be addressed accordingly. Lenz uses previous survey results to support his argument about frequent occurrences of scientific misconducts. He states that a significant number of faculty members from many AACSB-accredited business schools in America have observed scientific misconducts and ethically questionable research practices. "Dubious research practices could, therefore, no longer be described as a rare occurrence even if it has to be admitted that a precise estimation is difficult" (2014, p. 1173). He concluded that development of more specific and clear research and publication ethical guidelines and disclosure of misconducts could deter scientific misconducts and questionable research practices.

The brief literature review above clearly indicate that research and publication ethics are necessary for knowledge development and dissemination, and any scientific research misconducts should be identified and enforced. It seems the research and ethical guidelines of COPE has helped academic journals and their editors to develop procedural

and ethical guidelines and to handle specific misconducts. Based on the review, the major publication misconducts that many academic journals have had to contend with over the years are unethical authorship, including ghost, guest, and gift authorship, data falsification and fabrication, plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, submission and publication fraud (multiple submission and publication), and potential conflicts of interest. Furthermore, the foregoing literatures suggest that specific and concrete publication ethics and guidelines, transparency, and disclosure of misconduct cases could deter scientific and publication misconducts.

3. KODISA Journals and Publication Ethics

Following and applying COPE guidelines and handling scientific and publication misconducts are not new to KODISA journals, and KODISA journals have placed enormous efforts to deter and prevent these misconducts over the years. Since its inception, KODISA journals have always placed great emphasis on fostering research and publication ethical environment. Conducting annual review of their publication ethics guidelines and published articles and identifying and sharing the outcomes of misconducts with other academic associations have helped KODISA and its journals to maintain academic integrity and ethics (see Hwang et al., (2018, 2017, 2015); Youn et al., (2015, 2014). Furthermore, the association and one of the main editors have been recognized by Korean Research Foundation (KRF), being awarded a KRF grant to research and share research and publication ethics and practices in Korea. The efforts have led to developing a journal, Journal of Research and Publication Ethics, that specifically focuses on research and publication ethics (Kim & Youn, 2019; Suh et al., 2019).

In terms of transparency, the four major KODISA journals, Journal of Distribution Science (JDS), Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business, Journal of Business, Economics and Environmental Studies (JBEES), and Journal of Industrial Distribution and Business (IJIDB) are indexed in both Directory of Korea Open Access Journal and Directory of Open Access Journal. Being members of these open access journal directories provide KODISA journals with not only reader accessibility but also transparency. It deters research and publication misconducts because authors understand that everyone has access to their published manuscripts. As previously indicated, KODISA journals strictly follow and apply the COPE guidelines and specific procedural duties, responsibilities and guidelines for authors, editors, and

reviewers, as clearly written in their Research Publication Ethics.

There have been some unethical authorship misconducts, including ghost, guest, and gift authorships, that KODISA journals have had to deal with. The editorial board office and ethics committee of KODISA have reviewed these misconducts, rejected or retracted manuscripts, and notified authors and employer institutions. As of today, KODISA journals have not had any misconduct directly associated with data falsification and fabrication. There is no established mechanism or technology to detect these types of misconducts; therefore, KODISA journals heavily rely on peer reviewers and editors to identify and detect these types of misconduct. There have been many plagiarism cases, including self-plagiarism, that KODISA and its reviewers and editors detected. For minor misconducts, the editorial board of each journal has notified authors and asked them to revise and resubmit their manuscripts. For serious plagiarism cases, the editorial board office and ethics committee of KODISA have reviewed and cited these misconducts, rejected or retracted manuscripts, notified authors and employer institutions, and shared their names with KRF and other academic associations in Korea. Potential conflict of interest is another research and publication misconduct that is extremely difficult to identify by reviewers and editors; however, any manuscript with this type of misconduct will be rejected or retracted.

4. Conclusions

KODISA and its journals have done great work in making their journals transparent and combatting the issues associated with plagiarism, including self-plagiarism; however, it seems there is no mechanism to detect or deter unethical authorship, conflicts of interest, and fabrication and falsification misconducts. On the other hand, the inception of Journal of Research and Publication Ethics (JRPE) demonstrates how KODISA and its journals continuous view research and publication ethics as their foremost important factor in maintaining and improving academic journals. The future research and scholastic manuscripts in JRPE could provide necessary and updated information about research and publication ethics, practices, and misconducts, and the journal could also provide specific measures to detect and deter misconducts.

KODISA journals understand that continuously improving quality and reputation of journals requires consistent, concrete, and clear research and publication ethical guidelines. Moreover, becoming more vigilant to deter, detect, and terminate publication misconducts further improve the reputation and quality of the journals.

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