

Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement

Updated January 8, 2026

1. Authorship and Contributorship

1.1. Authorship Criteria: All listed Authors must have made substantial intellectual contributions and participated in the research. Authorship requires meeting all four criteria: significant contributions to the work; drafting or critically revising the manuscript; final approval of the version to be published; and accountability for all aspects of the work.

1.2. CRediT Taxonomy: To enhance transparency and accountability, the journal strongly encourages Authors to adopt the CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) for specifying individual contributions.

1.3. Ethical Oversight: The journal strictly prohibits ghost authorship, guest authorship, and gift authorship to maintain integrity.

1.4. Changes to Authorship: Any addition, removal, or reordering of Authors after submission must be accompanied by a written justification and explicit consent from all Authors. Changes after acceptance are generally disallowed.

2. Complaints and Appeals

2.1. Procedure: The journal implements a transparent and fair process to handle complaints related to the journal, its staff, or the editorial board.

2.2. Appeals: Authors may submit a formal appeal within two weeks of the editorial decision. Appeals must be supported by evidence. The final ruling lies with the Editor-in-Chief or Executive Editor.

3. Handling Allegations of Misconduct

3.1. Scope: Misconduct includes but is not limited to fabrication, falsification, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and inappropriate use of AI-generated content.

- 3.2. Investigation: Allegations are investigated rigorously following COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) guidelines.
- 3.3. Outcomes: Potential outcomes include Expressions of Concern, formal Retractions, or referral to the Author's institution for further action.

4. Conflicts of Interest

- 4.1. Disclosure: All Authors, reviewers, and editors are required to disclose any potential competing interests—financial or non-financial—at submission or assignment.
- 4.2. Neutrality: Editors or reviewers with conflicts of interest will be recused from the decision-making process to preserve impartiality.

5. Data Sharing, Reproducibility, and Preprints

- 5.1. Data Availability: Authors are encouraged to deposit data and code in publicly accessible repositories and cite these using DOIs. Data sharing should comply with ethical and privacy considerations where applicable.
- 5.2. Preprints: The posting of manuscripts on recognized preprint servers (e.g., arXiv, bioRxiv) is supported and does not affect the originality status of the paper, provided this is disclosed upon submission.

6. Ethical Oversight of Research

- 6.1. Human and Environmental Ethics: Research involving human participants must have approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or equivalent ethical body.
- 6.2. Geographical Sensitivity: Studies involving sensitive environmental data or vulnerable regions should be conducted with appropriate ethical responsibility.

7. Intellectual Property and Plagiarism

- 7.1. Licensing: Articles are published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License. Authors retain copyright.
- 7.2. Screening: All submissions undergo plagiarism detection via iThenticate or CrossCheck to ensure originality.

7.3. Jurisdictional Neutrality and Maps: Authors must use internationally recognized standards for map preparation. The journal maintains strict neutrality on territorial claims and jurisdictional boundaries and expects Authors to adhere to these standards.

8. Post-publication Discussion

The journal provides a formal platform for scholarly critique. Authors will have an opportunity to respond to substantive post-publication comments before their publication.

9. Corrections and Retractions

9.1. Corrections: Minor errors are addressed through Corrigenda or Errata.

9.2. Retractions: Retractions follow COPE Retraction Guidelines strictly. Retraction notices remain permanently linked to the original publication DOI.

10. Safeguarding the Scholarly Record (AI Policy)

10.1. Generative AI: AI tools may not be listed as Authors. Any AI-assisted language polishing must be transparently disclosed in the manuscript. The use of AI to generate primary scientific data (e.g., maps, results) constitutes a serious ethical breach.

10.2. Policy Evolution: This statement is reviewed annually to ensure alignment with COPE and international publishing standards.