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Policy on Conflicts of Interest

The Journal will only publish articles after the author(s) have confirmed that they have disclosed all potential conflicts of interest.

The Peer Review System

Definition. Peer review (also known as refereeing) is the process of subjecting an author's scholarly work, research or ideas to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the same field. Peer review requires a community of experts in a given (and often narrowly defined) field, who are qualified and able to perform impartial review. Peer review refers to the work done during the screening of submitted manuscripts and funding applications. This normative process encourages authors to meet the accepted standards of their discipline and prevents the dissemination of unwarranted claims, unacceptable interpretations, and personal views. Peer review increases the probability that weaknesses will be identified, and, with advice and encouragement, fixed. For both grant-funding and publication in a scholarly journal, it is also normally a requirement that the subject is both novel and substantial.

Type. The journal adopts the double-blind review process. The reviewer and the author do not know each other's identity.

Recruiting Referees. The task of picking reviewers is the responsibility of the editorial board. When a manuscript arrives, an editor solicits reviews from scholars or other experts to referee the paper.

Manuscript. In some cases, the authors may suggest the referees' names subject to the Editorial Board's approval. The referees must have an excellent track record as researchers in the field as evidenced by researches published in refereed

journals, research-related awards, and an experience in peer review. Referees are not selected from among the author's close colleagues, students, or friends. Referees are to inform the editor of any conflict of interests that may arise. The Editorial Board often invites the research authors to name people whom they consider qualified to referee their work. The author's input in selecting referees is solicited because academic writing typically is very specialized. The identities of the referees selected by the Editorial Board are kept unknown to research authors. However, the reviewer's identity can be disclosed under some special circumstances.

Peer Review Process. Members of the Editorial Board review first the manuscript and, when necessary, require the revision to be complied prior to the submission of the paper to the external referees. The Editorial Board sends advance copies of an author's work to experts in the field (known as "referees" or "reviewers") through e-mail or a Web-based manuscript processing system. There are two or three referees for a given article. Two are experts of the topic of research and one is an expert in research and statistics who shall review the technical components of the research. These referees return to the board the evaluation of the work that indicates the observed weaknesses or problems along with suggestions for improvement. The board then evaluates the referees' comments and notes opinion of the manuscript before passing the decision with the referees' comments back to the author(s).

Criteria for Acceptance and Rejection. A manuscript is accepted when it is (1) endorsed for publication by 2 or 3 referees; (2) the instructions of the reviewers are substantially complied; (3) the manuscript passes the plagiarism detection test with a score of at least 90 for originality; (4) the manuscript has an English writing readability score of below 60 in the Flesch Reading Ease test and a Gunning Fog Index of at least 12; (5) the entries in the literature cited pass the reference checker software; (6) the formula passes the formula checker software; the spelling and grammar passes the "*Grammarly*" software checker; and, human academic writing expert; otherwise the manuscript is rejected. The referee's evaluations include an explicit recommendation of what to do with the manuscript, often chosen from options provided by the journal. Most recommendations are along the following lines:

- to unconditionally accept the manuscript,
- to accept it in the event that its authors improve it based on referees' recommendation,

- to reject it, but encourage revision and invite resubmission,
- to reject it outright

In situations where the referees disagree substantially about the quality of a work, there are a number of strategies for reaching a decision. When the editor receives very positive and very negative reviews for the same manuscript, the board will solicit one or more additional reviews as a tie-breaker. In the case of ties, the board may invite authors to reply to a referee's criticisms and permit a compelling rebuttal to break the tie. If the editor does not feel confident to weigh the persuasiveness of a rebuttal, the board may solicit a response from the referee who made the original criticism. In rare instances, the board will convey communications between an author and a referee, in effect allowing them to debate on a point. Even in such case, however, the board does not allow referees to confer with each other and the goal of the process is explicitly not to reach consensus or to convince anyone to change his/her opinions.

English Writing Readability. Readability tests are designed to indicate comprehension difficulty when reading a passage of contemporary academic English. To guide teachers and researchers in the proper selection of articles that suit the comprehension level of users, contributors are advised to use the Flesch Kincaid readability test particularly the Flesch Reading Ease test. The interpretation of the score is as follows:

Score Notes

- 90.0 – 100.00 Easily understandable by an average 11 year-old student
- 60.0 – 70.0 Easily understandable by 13 to 15 year-old students
- 0.0 – 30.0 Best understood by university graduates

Moreover, the Gunning Fog Index, developed by Robert Gunning, an American Businessman in 1952, measures the readability of English writing. The index estimates the years of formal education required to understand the text on a first reading. A fog index of 12 requires a reading level of a US high school senior (around 18 years old) or third year universities level in the Philippines.

Plagiarism Detection. Contributors are advised to use software for plagiarism detection to increase the manuscript's chances of acceptance. The editorial office uses licensed software to screen research articles for plagiarism. The standard set is 80 percent original to pass the plagiarism detection test.

Formula Checker. When formulas are included, contributors are advised to subject these to software for formula checker.

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Author's Research Track Record. The Journal places premium value on authors with good publication citation records in the Thomson Reuters (ISI), Scopus Elsevier, Google Scholar, Open Researcher and Contributor I.D. (ORCID) and the Hirsch Index (in the Google Scholar citations index). The H-index is an important criterion for selection of editorial board members, peer reviewers, and journal contributors.

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