



EDITORIAL ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ACADEMIC FRAUD

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Abstract

Western religious and intellectual traditions came together in Monastic life. The production of new knowledge was independent to the time it took for creation. Quality was all that mattered. Today, a bizarre reversal has taken place. Quality has been sacrificed to time. Given the neoliberal state and right-wing politics, the business model itself, lacking any moral core, has been applied to universities. Today, every aspect of academic life must be analyzed, tested, and quantified. Whereas previously, the highest academic accolade was given to a single-authored refereed publication, today, it is the number of citations that matter. Hence articles with ten authors are now frequent, where each contributes close to zero in work, and one's inclusion is frequently paid for. Overall, the very fabric of intellectual life is being eroded. Far from improving quality, individuals are encouraged to 'play the system'. Undeniable is the fact that academics themselves are forced to encompass a fundamentally corrupt system of practices to negotiate their interests. Hence ethical behaviour becomes negotiable, and collegiality is undermined. This promotes an increase in plagiarism, deceit, fraud at a global level, and the trading of favours for credit. The following short paper summarises how this takes place. It demands that academics report corrupt practices. It also calls on university bureaucracies to review the critically flawed system they have created.

Keywords: academic life; ethical behaviour; fraud

Abstrak

Tradisi intelektual barat terjadi secara bersamaam dalam kehidupan monastik. Pembangunan pengetahuan yang baru tidak tergantung pada waktu yang dibutuhkan untuk penciptaannya, namun sebuah proses yang mengedepankan kualitas. Yang terjadi belakangan ini adalah sebaliknya. Kualitas telah dikorbankan untuk waktu. Praktek neoliberal, politik sayap kanan dan model bisnis, yang kurang menaruh perhatian terhadap tata moralitas, telah juga merambah ke roda operasional universitas. Saat ini, setiap aspek kehidupan akademik harus dianalisis, diuji, dan diukur. Sedangkan sebelumnya, penghargaan akademik tertinggi diberikan kepada publikasi yang telah melalui proses review yang seksama, dan ditulis oleh seorang penulis tunggal. Sementara yang terjadi belakangan ini, yang dominan adalah kuantitas, termasuk jumlah publikasi dan banyaknya sitasi. Oleh karenanya, artikel dengan sepuluh penulis atau lebih sangat sering ditemukan, di mana sebagian penulis berkontribusi pada level yang mendekati nol. Penyertaan seorang penulis sering kali karena kesediaan yang bersangkutan untuk membayar. Secara keseluruhan, jalinan kehidupan intelektual sedang terkikis, jauh dari upaya-upaya yang ditujukan untuk meningkatkan kualitas, dan pihak-pihak yang terlibat didorong untuk 'bermain dengan sistem'. Tidak bisa disangkal jika dalam kenyataannya, para akademisi dipaksa untuk melakoni sistem yang pada dasarnya 'korup' dalam rangka menegosiasikan kepentingan mereka. Dalam konteks ini, perilaku yang beretika menjadi sesuatu yang bisa dinegosiasikan, dan hubungan kolegialitas menjadi teremehkan. Kondisi ini telah mendorong peningkatan praktek plagiat, penipuan, pemalsuan di tingkat global, dan terjadi pula proses memberi bantuan dengan harapan pihak yang dibantu akan melakukan hal yang sama dikemudian hari. Tulisan singkat berikut ini merangkum bagaimana hal ini terjadi. Artikel ini menuntut agar para akademisi melaporkan praktik-praktek keakademikan yang tidak genah dan juga memohon birokrasi di level universitas untuk meninjau ulang sistem yang telah mereka buat dan menyebabkan terjadinya kondisi-kondisi yang dipaparkan di dalam tulisan ini.

Kata kunci: kehidupan akademik; tingkah laku beretika; penipuan

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It has come to our notice that there has been a recent increase in academic fraud within academia that takes a variety of forms. These are frequently difficult to detect. The following observations are an attempt to clarify the various means that are taken by unscrupulous academics to boost their own image. The focus of such behaviour is on promotion in the hierarchy of academic merit. In most systems, this implies promotion to professor or, in the United States, to a graded scale of professorial achievement. So, this little commentary constitutes a warning to university administrators (who are usually unaware of the intricacies of academic publishing), to academics, to research assistants, and to students whose work is often seriously exploited by staff for their own purposes. Simply stated, Fraud corrupts the foundation of academic life and should be censured whenever it appears. It is the responsibility of all of us to report such activity to the highest authority.

Best Practice

The integrity of academic life is based upon the honesty and collegiality of its members. Most behave appropriately. We all know that papers based on first-class research are difficult to generate. From the commencement of writing, the process of having an article published in a good academic journal is a lengthy and time-consuming event. For a single article, this can take up to a year when the writing, reviews, and publication schedule are considered. Therefore, the normal standard for publication by academic staff is usually two refereed articles per annum in a good journal. Many authors cannot achieve this output due to the transfer of administrative workload to academic staff, among other reasons (lack of financial support, no sabbatical leave for good researchers, personal circumstances, etc.). The point here is that for even experienced researchers, any more than two or three acceptable papers per annum is difficult, particularly within the arena of the built environment in which we find ourselves. Any more than this automatically becomes suspect.

The problem is that, in an increasing number of cases, selfish individuals undermine academic integrity through a variety of methods. These methods are not hard to discover, and a few queries to Google will produce many diverse methods of how ones could cheat their way to the top. Such behaviour is an insult to colleagues, it undermines the integrity upon which academic life is based, it erodes collegiality, and it creates an environment of distrust and suspicion. So academic life and a healthy scholarly environment are become undermined by a few selfish, unscrupulous, and power-hungry individuals.

While the pressure on all academics to publish is increasing, unfortunately, fraudulent practices are more prevalent in the Global South, including Indonesia. The reasons for this are apparent:

1. The difficulty of encountering having to publish in English, outside one's native language
2. Academics in the global north have significantly more research support, so targeting them for financial contributions is relatively ineffective.
3. The Global North has significantly more encompassing control over academic output.
4. Publishers of all kinds, therefore, target developing countries of the Global South where academics are more vulnerable to fraudulent practices.

5. Claiming students' works as one owned personal publication is, in general deemed unacceptable. Any academic should be capable of producing their own quality work.
6. Behaviour, in accordance with 'the law', is a western concept. Asian behaviour is much more conditioned by social practices that are more 'negotiable' than fixed. This allows a more tolerant approach to academic fraud.

Worst Practice

Fraudulent processes are well known to most staff, but these are becoming more sophisticated. Among these are the following:

1. Adding one's name to an article having made no input.
2. Exploiting student work based on 'supervision' when none occurred.
3. Not categorizing articles based on recognized academic merit.
4. Paying for awards such as 'best researcher' that are fraudulent and have no merit.
5. Paying for one's name to be included in academic work.
6. Listing articles where no possible contact has taken place between researchers.
7. Listing Journals that have no peer review.
8. Articles not listed on any academic databases.
9. Paying a huge fee for publication without any academic services.
10. Listing articles where the subject is totally outside one's field of competence.
11. The review time is exceedingly short or nonexistent (this can usually take up to six months for a top-class refereed journal). This is because the article is not 'reviewed'.
12. Publishing the same article in different journals with different titles.
13. Being offered a review result and return in ten days (or other) when the first-class journals review process can easily take up to three to six months to respond.
14. Listing collaborators on papers that come from different fields, different institutions, and different countries, all at the same time.
15. Listing a multitude of papers but where none are single-authored (the real measure of scholarship)

As a measure of 14 and 15 above, in our research for this editorial, we have discovered one author who has listed at least 36 articles for the first nine months of 2022 (in some, dates are missing). Given the everyday pressures of research, writing, formatting, submission, review, resubmission, and publication in a Q1 Journal can take over a year, and we must question how this is possible. In addition, subject areas range from propaedeutics, aerospace instrumentation, optometry, and nutrition, to electronic engineering and medicine. All of these disciplines are far outside the author's primary field of competence and qualifications. Associations with other academics in publishing emerge from Columbia, Nigeria, Iraq, and Iran, to Bengal, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and Indonesia, listing institutions in total in some 20 countries, frequently with several different universities in one place, e.g., in Russia - (Saint Petersburg, Tatarstan, Plekhanov, and Moscow).

This is somewhat unheard of in academic circles, raising a multitude of questions demanding answers. For example, questions have been raised by at least one journal that said, 'After publication, concerns were raised about authorship and description of authors' contributions. The Editors requested the authors to provide raw original data and explanations regarding

the contributions but found the response provided by the authors insufficient. The Authors were also unable to provide the data in the format that would allow for the confirmation of its veracity (i.e., including sufficiently detailed meta-data). The Editors, therefore, no longer have confidence in the reliability of the data presented in this Article.’ The article was published in August of this year and immediately retracted by the journal.

Notable Scams

(Publications can be checked either on Google Scholar or Research Gate)

It is quite clear that India, China, and Iran have a quasi-monopoly on fraudulent websites and practices. Several excellent commentaries on academic scams are listed in the references below. But there are a few notable organizations that can be mentioned. A few key websites that list predatory practices are the following: The following are a few short extracts from Esther van de Vosse | Feb 8, 2019, | Research, Research Integrity.

VD GOOD - ‘Various people sent me a message that they received a young scientist award from a similar organization, VDGGOOD, that asked them to pay \$360 for registration to obtain the award’.

NESIN - ‘I have not read such nonsense in a long time. NESIN appears to be part of ScienceFather, which is a predatory conferences organizer located in Menachipuram, India.

RULA - The International Research Ratna Awards from the International Journal of Research Under Literal Access (RULA) appears to be another award you can obtain by signing yourself up and paying a fee.

ABRF - ‘To qualify, one must: 1) be a member of the organization, 2) pay two fees (one for nominating and one for receiving the award), and 3) self-nominate as ‘applicant should ensure that he/she deserves for the award applied. In my opinion, these three requirements indicate it is a nonsense award. The main achievement of the awardee will be filling in forms and paying fees.’

ISSN AWARDS - ‘you can self-nominate and will receive an award after you pay your 120 USD fee.’

InSc AWARDS - On their website, they claim to have accreditation, but the accreditation organization itself, United Ackreditering Services Limited (UASL), appears to be a fake organization operating from a shared workspace in London.

INSO - ‘is just another VDGGOOD organization branch (see above). There is no address or global location on their website, not even the name of anyone working at this organization.

This a simple example of dishonest behaviour.

First, most researchers will immediately recognize a scam (for example, from any of the above sites). Any honest academic would check out the website as being ‘too good to be true’ and would refuse to take part out of respect for their peers. These academics support the system’s integrity, as well as knowing that if they don’t, their colleagues will notice having been offered scams in the same fashion.

Second, other academics will then proceed with a deliberately fraudulent process in the hope that they will gain status and social capital from it. Also, anyone who takes part in such behaviour has likely adopted other forms of deceit and fraudulent behaviour. The most important point is that applying for such an award is a conscious and deliberate attempt to falsify one's academic record. It cannot be done accidentally since money has to be transferred. Given the seriousness of such activity, it should be fully censured by their colleagues and the academic administration of their university.

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