RESEARCH INTEGRITY IN THE AGE OF AI: POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract. This editorial addresses the evolving ethical challenges in scholarly publishing, particularly concerning artificial intelligence (AI), plagiarism, self-plagiarism, excessive self-citation, data fabrication, multiple submissions, and authorship practices. While AI can enhance research communication by refining language and improving efficiency, its misuse can affect transparency and accountability. Traditional threats, such as plagiarism, redundant publication, and citation manipulation, continue to weaken the credibility of research, while new risks are emerging from AI-generated content and fabricated findings. Drawing on guidance from COPE and major publishers, including Elsevier and Springer Nature, this article underscores the need for clear policies, transparent disclosure, and rigorous editorial review. It argues that research integrity depends on the shared responsibility of authors and editors, supported by both technological tools and critical human judgment. Preserving the credibility of scholarship requires not only firm measures

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against misconduct but also reinforcement of the core principles of integrity, transparency, validity, and accountability.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scholarly publishing is undergoing a rapid transformation. Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of research communication, offering possibilities for language polishing, literature searches, and even data processing. At the same time, this technology raises ethical questions about transparency, accountability, and misuse. Beyond AI, challenges such as plagiarism, text recycling, salami slicing, excessive self-citation, duplicate submissions, and problematic authorship continue to threaten the credibility of academic publishing.

The central problem is that AI-related risks of data fabrication and falsification now complicate publishing integrity. While major publishers and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) provide ethical guidelines, applying them consistently across varied contexts remains a challenge for both editors and authors. Editorial judgment, peer-review resources, and institutional trust are all under pressure from these evolving threats.

This editorial **aims** to highlight the key ethical issues facing scholarly publishing today – AI use, plagiarism and self-plagiarism, citation practices, data fabrication, multiple submissions, and guest authorship. By synthesizing current policies and guidelines from COPE and major publishers, it provides recommendations for authors and editors on how to address these challenges responsibly.

2. AI POLICIES, ETHICAL PRINCIPLES, AND EDITORIAL CHALLENGES

In recent years, AI has become widespread in scholarly communication. Properly used, it can polish language, improve clarity, accelerate literature searches, and reduce time spent on mechanical tasks, allowing researchers to focus on the core of their work. However, its broad accessibility raises new ethical questions, particularly around transparency and responsibility in its use (Nature Editorial, 2023; Thorp, 2023). One of the most significant ethical concerns is ensuring proper acknowledgment. Authors should disclose any use of AI, especially when it is involved in writing, data analysis, or manuscript preparation, to protect transparency and accountability. While language-editing tools are often allowed, substantial scholarly contributions, particularly in discussion, interpretation, and conclusions, must remain the authors' own intellectual work (Elsevier, 2024b; Springer Nature, 2024). Misrepresenting AI-generated content as human-authored undermines academic integrity and violates ethical guidelines (COPE, 2024c).

All leading publishing houses have developed and approved AI-use policies. Elsevier, Springer Nature, and Wiley permit limited use (e.g., language editing) with transparent disclosure and prohibit listing AI tools as authors; they also restrict unacknowledged generation of substantive scholarly content (Elsevier, 2024a; Springer Nature, 2024; Wiley, 2025). Reflecting similar principles, the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor

Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute" has also developed an institutional policy on AI use in academic activities. This policy emphasizes responsible, transparent use and explicitly prohibits presenting AI-generated or paraphrased content as one's own work (KPI, 2023).

Although these institutional and publisher policies set clear ethical guidelines, putting them into practice is often difficult. Detecting and verifying AI presence in manuscripts remains challenging, as popular AI-detection tools (e.g., GPTZero, Turnitin's AI Writing Indicator, Quillbot AI Detection Tool, and others) vary in performance, and independent studies show both false positives and false negatives, especially affecting non-native English authors (Liang et al., 2023; Sadasivan et al., 2025). Even legitimate language polishing can enhance "AI-probability" scores. Detection tools can offer clues, but editorial decisions should not rely on them alone (Chechitelli, 2023). This raises a fundamental problem for editors and reviewers: reliance on detection software alone cannot ensure the integrity of the editorial process. Consequently, human judgment, cross-checking with the author's prior work, and transparent disclosure policies remain critical.

Editors are aware of qualitative signs of over-reliance on AI tools: mechanical regularity in sentence structure, overuse of formulaic connectors, repetitive phrasing, or text that is grammatically fluent yet overly general and poor on argumentation. Such signals are not proof of machine authorship, but they require more rigorous review, author queries, or requests for clarifying documentation of methods and authorship contributions.

At *Advanced Education*, the priority is to assess the scholarly value of the submitted work. A manuscript may be well-written and still contribute little if it lacks originality, coherence, or methodological rigor. At the same time, a paper with minor language errors can be highly valuable if it presents robust design, credible analysis, and a clear contribution to educational theory or practice. Our multi-layered review process, combining similarity checks, policy compliance verification, and expert peer review, ensures that only manuscripts offering substantial contributions to educational theory and practice are accepted.

AI can enrich research when used ethically and with human oversight. For literature search and synthesis, tools like Consensus, Scite, Research Rabbit, and SciSpace can help identify and contextualize references. For conceptual development, systems such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Perplexity can assist in brainstorming ideas, provided that researchers critically evaluate suggestions and retain intellectual ownership of the argument. Language editing is widely permitted when disclosed. Computational support (e.g., data preprocessing, code generation) is acceptable if outputs are independently verified and the role of AI is reported to maintain transparency and reproducibility (COPE, 2023; PLOS, n.d).

Certain uses of AI remain clearly unacceptable: generating analytical sections of a manuscript (e.g., Results, Discussion, Conclusions); fabricating or manipulating data; omitting disclosure of AI use; or listing AI tools as authors. Several publishers also restrict or prohibit AI-generated images or graphics unless explicitly approved and fully documented (Flanagin et al., 2023a; Nature Editorial, 2023; Springer Nature, 2024; Thorp, 2023). These constraints reflect a broader ethical framework designed to guide responsible integration of AI into scholarly publishing.

At the core of this framework are four key principles: integrity, transparency, validity, and accountability. Integrity means that AI should support but not replace human authors,

ensuring accuracy and ethical standards are maintained. Transparency requires openly stating which AI tools were used, how they were applied, and the extent of human oversight. Validity involves careful fact-checking, bias detection, and verification of AI outputs. Accountability places final responsibility on the authors, who must be ready to justify their work and ensure compliance with established ethical and quality norms. By following these principles, researchers can take advantage of AI's efficiency and clarity while still protecting the trust and credibility essential to scholarly communication (Hryciw, Seely, & Kyeremanteng, 2023).

While AI can enhance the effectiveness of research communication, it cannot replace scholarly originality or the responsibility authors have for their work. Used as a supportive tool within clear ethical boundaries, AI can help produce high-quality manuscripts. Transparent disclosure, rigorous editorial review, and a strong author responsibility will ensure integrity in submitted research that advances reliable knowledge.

3. BEYOND SIMILARITY SCORES: DETECTING PLAGIARISM IN THE AI ERA

Despite the growing focus on AI ethics, plagiarism remains one of the most persistent threats to research integrity. Unlike AI misuse, which is still relatively new, plagiarism is a long-standing violation that undermines trust in scholarship. Its forms may evolve from word-for-word copying to the uncredited appropriation of ideas. However, the ethical principle is unchanged: presenting another person's words, explanations, theories, or conclusions as one's own without attribution compromises the credibility of academic work. The U.S. Office of Research Integrity (ORI) describes it as taking another person's explanation, theory, hypothesis, or conclusion, wholly or partially, without attribution (ORI, n.d.). COPE stresses that plagiarism is not limited to copying text; taking someone's ideas without acknowledgment is equally a violation of academic ethics (COPE, as cited in Taylor & Francis, n.d.). As Bouville (2008) notes, stealing ideas can be even more deceptive than copying text because it often goes unnoticed yet undermines the trust that scholarship depends on.

At *Advanced Education*, every manuscript that proceeds to peer review undergoes a similarity check with *StrikePlagiarism*. In recent years, most reports show a very low percentage of similarities. On the surface, this looks like progress. In reality, it might reflect the growing role of AI paraphrasing and summarizing, producing fluent, "original-looking" text that easily bypasses standard similarity detectors. The problem has not disappeared; it has simply evolved. Plagiarism detection software may miss such cases, but experienced reviewers recognize borrowed intellectual frameworks and distinctive lines of thought.

AI tools can make unattributed borrowing harder to detect. Paraphrasing and summarizing algorithms now produce clean, coherent text that passes most similarity checks. This is why plagiarism policies must include clear definitions that cover both text and ideas, and careful, knowledgeable peer review remains essential. Software can highlight matching strings, but only human judgment can identify when the originality of thought has been compromised. Protecting research integrity in the AI era will depend on a balance between technological tools and the critical expertise of editors and reviewers.

4. SELF-PLAGIARISM, REDUNDANT PUBLICATION, AND CITATION MANIPULATION

Closely related to plagiarism, but distinct in its implications, is *self-plagiarism*. In scholarly publishing, self-plagiarism, often referred to as "text recycling," occurs when authors reuse their own previously published text, data, or images without proper citation or acknowledgment, which can give readers the impression that the content is completely original (BioMed Central & COPE, 2016). While a limited similarity rate may be acceptable, particularly in methods sections or when updating results from an ongoing research, concerns arise when substantial portions of earlier work are republished as if they were new. Such practices can artificially increase publication counts, give readers a false picture of the research landscape, and reduce the originality that journals aim to maintain.

Another related questionable practice is *salami publication* (salami slicing): publishing the same results across multiple papers with only minor changes in text or presentation. Similarity reports may show a low percentage, yet the scientific contribution is unchanged. This practice wastes editorial and peer-review resources, overloads the literature with redundant publications, and can make readers believe that several independent studies support a conclusion, when in fact it is the same result presented in a different form (Smolčić, 2013).

Editors should address these cases individually, considering the amount of duplication, its location in the paper, and whether the authors have been transparent about related work. Minor issues may be resolved with a correction, while more serious or repeated cases may require retraction or referral to the author's institution. If the paper is still under review, authors might be asked to revise and cite the earlier work, or the journal may reject the paper if it is largely redundant. Clear policies on prior publication, plagiarism, and redundancy, stated in author guidelines and reinforced by requiring declarations of originality, help prevent such problems. Editors may request that authors submit copies of related work together with new manuscripts, making any overlap explicit. Such transparency enables fair editorial decisions and helps maintain trust and integrity in scholarly publishing.

Another important issue is *excessive self-citation*—citing one's previous work more than necessary to support the current study. While legitimate self-citation helps to connect a research trajectory and credit earlier contributions, disproportionate use can create "citation padding" to boost personal metrics like the h-index. Major publishers such as Springer Nature and Elsevier caution that self-citations must be relevant, proportionate, and directly support the manuscript's arguments, not used to manipulate metrics like the Journal Impact Factor or h-index (Springer Nature, n.d.; Elsevier, 2024). Springer Nature prohibits excessive or coordinated self-citation and irrelevant references to the journal of submission, warning that such practices may lead to rejection or institutional notification. Elsevier recommends that editors evaluate reference lists for disproportionate self-citation and request clear justification when its relevance is unclear. COPE reinforces these principles, advising editors to monitor and address citation manipulation, whether by authors or journals, through proportionate measures, ranging from revision requests to formal investigations (COPE, 2019). Clear citation policies, declarations of relevance, and diversity of sources help promote the integrity of scholarly publishing.

The implications for scholarly publishing and research integrity are significant. While self-plagiarism and excessive self-citation are not considered intentional fraud, they can

mislead readers by overstating novelty or scholarly authority, weakening confidence in the academic record. Transparency through clear policies, honest disclosure, and careful citation practices ensures research is evaluated for the strength of its ideas rather than inflated metrics. Journals, editors, and authors share this responsibility, and fulfilling this responsibility upholds the credibility of academic publishing.

5. DATA FABRICATION AND FALSIFICATION IN THE AGE OF AI

Beyond these citation-related concerns, the risks grow when we move from questionable writing practices to the intentional distortion of findings themselves. In the research-integrity policy, fabrication refers to inventing data or results and presenting them as if real, while falsification involves manipulating materials, processes, or data so that the published record no longer reflects the actual work. Together with plagiarism, these practices form the core of the U.S. Office of Research Integrity's (ORI, n.d.) "FFP" triad, a framework supported and reflected in editorial policies worldwide. COPE's flowcharts (last reviewed 2023) also outline editor actions when fabricated data are suspected before or after publication, emphasizing the need to contact authors, request explanations and raw data, and, where necessary, involve institutions (Wager, 2006a, 2006b).

Recent studies highlight how generative AI systems complicate the detection of fabrication and falsification. Research has shown that large language models (LLMs) can produce entire scientific manuscripts with fabricated data, which may appear credible enough to mislead both human readers and automated detection tools (Májovský et al., 2023; Elali & Rachid, 2023). The challenge lies in the apparent credibility of these outputs: tables, figures, and citations may look authentic, but closer examination often reveals data that are not based on real experiments or verifiable sources.

This phenomenon raises two critical concerns. First, it demonstrates a weakness in current plagiarism and AI-detection tools, which are designed primarily to identify textual matches or known patterns, but cannot verify the factual accuracy of reported results. Second, it imposes a greater responsibility on peer reviewers and editors, who must now act as investigators, analyzing raw data, checking the origin of images, and verifying citations, rather than relying solely on automated checks. A parallel concern is fabricated or distorted citations. AI can produce convincing but non-existent references or misattribute real ones, which is documented in empirical studies and policy analyses (Elali & Rachid, 2023; Yousaf, 2025).

Because detectors are imperfect, rigorous peer review and thorough editorial checks are essential. Practical steps include requesting raw data and analysis scripts, verifying the origin and authenticity of images and figures, comparing the submission with the authors' prior work, and referring serious concerns to the relevant institutions when explanations are insufficient. These actions are aligned with COPE flowcharts and recent editorial guidance (COPE, 2023-a; COPE, 2023-b; Jones, 2024). The most effective way to protect research integrity is through transparent reporting: clearly disclose how AI was used, where human verification occurred, and which data and methods support the findings (Ugwu et al., 2024; NASEM, 2025).

The reliability of science is threatened by AI-assisted fabrication and falsification. Detection tools may help, but they cannot replace the critical judgment of reviewers and

editors. Maintaining the integrity of science will depend on more than automated checks: it demands openness from authors, editorial oversight, and a shared commitment across the research community to verify what is published. Without that, the scientific literature risks becoming convincing in appearance but hollow in truth.

6. ETHICAL CONCERNS IN MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION PRACTICES

In addition to the dangers of fabricated data, publication integrity can also be compromised by how manuscripts are submitted. Practices such as duplicate submissions or redundant reporting may not involve falsification, but they similarly weaken editorial trust and waste scarce peer-review resources.

Submitting the same manuscript to more than one journal at the same time is a clear violation of publication ethics (COPE, 2024a). Such cases are rarely hidden for long: editorial boards and reviewers often interconnect within a field, and duplicate submissions are quickly exposed through cross-checks, preprint servers, or even a simple search. When confirmed, editors may contact the other journals involved, reject the manuscript, and, in serious cases, notify the author's institution. Repeated violations can lead to blacklisting, limiting the author's ability to submit future work.

A related problem arises when authors send multiple different manuscripts to the same journal simultaneously. Although not misconduct in the strict sense, this practice strains editorial resources and slows peer review. Most editors and reviewers volunteer their time, and assessing several submissions from one author simultaneously reduces the attention available to other manuscripts. COPE highlights that duplicate or concurrent submissions misuse editorial resources and may require rejection. In this context, authors are expected to submit strategically, ensuring manuscripts fit the journal's scope and justify editorial investment (COPE, 2024a).

7. AUTHORSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES: CREDIT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TRANSPARENCY

Concerns over who qualifies as an author remain central to research integrity. Listing individuals who did not make a genuine contribution (so-called guest or honorary authorship) undermines accountability and erodes trust. The authorship criteria are now widely accepted: substantial contribution to the work; drafting or critical revision; final approval; and accountability for the integrity of all parts (ICMJE, 2024). To enforce this, many journals require contribution statements, and the CRediT taxonomy, now an ANSI/NISO standard, provides a structured way to describe specific roles such as conceptualization, methodology, data curation, writing, or supervision (NISO, 2022).

Late authorship changes are particularly sensitive. Both COPE (2024b) and ICMJE (2024) recommend that editors obtain a clear explanation and signed agreement from all listed authors before allowing additions or removals. Most journals will not permit such changes after acceptance unless the reasons are compelling and thoroughly documented. A limited exception applies if substantial new analyses or rewriting require the involvement of a new collaborator; in such cases, the CRediT taxonomy should transparently record the new author's role.

At its core, authorship is not only about credit but also responsibility. Clear criteria, transparency in contributions, and rigorous handling of changes ensure the credibility of the academic record.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Scientific publishing depends on integrity at every stage, from data generation to authorship assignment. Fabrication and falsification undermine trust, while practices such as text recycling, salami slicing, and excessive self-citation distort the scholarly record and manipulate metrics without adding real knowledge. Multiple submissions waste scarce editorial and peer-review resources, and careless or honorary authorship diminishes responsibility for the published work.

These issues undermine the trust on which academic publishing depends. For authors, the implication is straightforward: integrity requires careful authorship attribution, selective and responsible submissions, relevant citations, and transparent acknowledgment of any AI tools used in the preparation of manuscripts. For editors, the responsibility is to establish clear policies, conduct careful screening, and ensure consistent application of ethical guidelines. Adopting structured tools such as similarity checks, contribution taxonomies like CRediT, and transparent authorship declarations helps prevent misconduct before publication. When issues arise, consistent adherence to COPE guidance ensures that responses are fair, proportionate, and accurate.

The credibility of the scholarly record depends on the joint commitment of both sides. Every transparent contribution statement, well-judged editorial decision, and carefully chosen citation helps strengthen the research integrity. The future of scholarship depends not on the volume of what we publish, but on the honesty and clarity with which it is done.

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НАУКОВА ДОБРОЧЕСНІСТЬ В ЕПОХУ ШТУЧНОГО ІНТЕЛЕКТУ: ПОЛІТИКИ, ПРАКТИКИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ

Ця редакційна стаття розглядає проблеми етики наукових досліджень у епоху штучного інтелекту (ШІ), а саме плагіат, самоплагіат, надмірне самоцитування, фабрикація та фальсифікація даних, авторство. Хоча ШІ може покращити наукову комунікацію шляхом удосконалення мови та підвищення ефективності, його неналежне використання може поставити під загрозу прозорість дослідження. Порушення, такі як плагіат та маніпуляції з цитуванням послаблюють довіру до наукових досліджень, в той час як нові ризики виникають у зв'язку з контентом, створеним ШІ, та сфабрикованими результатами. Спираючись на рекомендації COPE та провідних видавців, зокрема Elsevier і Springer Nature, ця стаття підкреслює необхідність чітких політик, прозорого розкриття інформації та ретельної редакційної перевірки. Автори підкреслюють, що засади наукової доброчесності формуються на основі спільної відповідальності дослідників, рецензентів та редакторів. Ефективне виконання цієї відповідальності можливе лише за умови поєднання технологічних інструментів, зокрема програм для перевірки оригінальності тексту, з ґрунтовним критичним аналізом наукових праць. Збереження авторитетності наукового видавництва вимагає не лише рішучих заходів проти порушень, але й зміцнення основних принципів доброчесності, прозорості та відповідальності.

Ключові слова: штучний інтелект (ШІ), етичні принципи, редакційні виклики, плагіат, самоплагіат, фабрикація даних, авторство, наукова доброчесність.