

Appeals and Complaints Policy

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1. Purpose

The Appeals and Complaints Policy outlines the procedures for authors, reviewers, and readers to raise concerns, complaints, or appeals related to editorial decisions, publication ethics, or journal operations. Its purpose is to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in resolving disputes, maintaining the integrity of the journal, and safeguarding the rights of all parties involved.

The journal is committed to handling all appeals and complaints promptly, respectfully, and confidentially, in accordance with the ethical standards of scholarly publishing.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Authors appealing editorial or peer-review decisions.
- Complaints about publication ethics, editorial conduct, or peer review fairness.
- Concerns raised by readers, reviewers, or institutions regarding research integrity, plagiarism, fabrication, authorship, or conflicts of interest.
- General grievances related to journal management, publication delays, or communication issues.

This policy does not cover disagreements between co-authors, which should be resolved internally or through the authors' institutions.

3. Principles

The journal adheres to the following core principles in managing appeals and complaints:

1. Fairness: Every appeal or complaint will be reviewed objectively and without bias.
2. Transparency: The process and decisions will be clearly communicated to all parties.
3. Confidentiality: Identities and details will be kept confidential during and after the investigation.
4. Accountability: The journal will take corrective action if errors, ethical breaches, or procedural failures are confirmed.
5. Non-Retaliation: Individuals who file appeals or complaints in good faith will not face discrimination or negative consequences.

4. Appeals Policy

Authors have the right to appeal editorial or peer review decisions if they believe:

- The decision was based on a misunderstanding or factual error.
- The peer review process was biased, unfair, or procedurally incorrect.
- Important reviewer or editor comments were misinterpreted.

4.1 How to Submit an Appeal

- Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Editor-in-Chief within 10 days of receiving the editorial decision.
- The appeal letter should include:
 - ✓ The manuscript title, reference number, and date of submission.
 - ✓ A clear explanation of the reason(s) for appeal.
 - ✓ Evidence or arguments supporting the claim (e.g., factual clarifications, reviewer bias, or ethical concerns).

Appeals must be submitted by the corresponding author on behalf of all co-authors.

4.2 Handling the Appeal

- The Editor-in-Chief will review the appeal, sometimes in consultation with Managing Editors or Editorial Board Members who were not involved in the original decision.
- The editor may:
 - Uphold the original decision.
 - Request an additional or independent peer review.
 - Reverse or modify the decision if justified.
- The final decision will be communicated in writing to the corresponding author.
- The Editor-in-Chief's decision is final and binding.

4.3 Appeals Not Considered

Appeals will not be considered if:

- The author disagrees with reviewers' opinions but provides no new evidence.
- The appeal is based solely on the desire for publication without addressing editorial concerns.
- The manuscript has been formally withdrawn or published elsewhere.

5. Complaints Policy

The journal encourages authors, reviewers, and readers to raise concerns about:

- Editorial behavior or bias.
- Unreasonable delays in peer review or publication.
- Unethical research or publication practices.
- Plagiarism, data fabrication, or duplicate publication.
- Violation of confidentiality or conflicts of interest.

5.1 How to File a Complaint

- Complaints should be submitted in writing to the Editorial Office or directly to the Editor-in-Chief via the journal's official email address.
- The complaint must include:
 - ✓ Complainant's full name and contact information.
 - ✓ A clear description of the issue, including relevant dates and evidence.
 - ✓ Any previous correspondence related to the complaint.

Anonymous complaints will be reviewed only if supported by credible evidence.

5.2 Investigation Process

- The complaint will be acknowledged within 10 working days.
- The appointed committee will investigate the matter impartially.
- If the complaint involves the Editor-in-Chief, it will be referred to an independent editorial board or the publisher.
- Both the complainant and the person(s) involved will be given an opportunity to present their perspectives.
- After a fair review, a written decision will be communicated within 20 working days, or longer if the issue requires deeper investigation.

5.3 Possible Outcomes

Depending on the findings, the journal may:

- Provide clarification or apology for misunderstandings.
- Improve internal editorial procedures.
- Correct, retract, or remove an article if serious ethical violations are confirmed.
- Notify relevant institutions or ethics committees in cases of misconduct.

All outcomes will be implemented transparently and ethically.

6. Handling Ethical Misconduct

If the complaint involves research misconduct, such as plagiarism, data falsification, or unethical experimentation:

- The journal will follow the procedures outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).
- The authors' affiliated institution(s) may be contacted for investigation.
- Confirmed, corrective actions such as retraction, correction, or expression of concern will be addressed.

The journal prioritizes the integrity of the scholarly record above all else.

7. Confidentiality

All appeals and complaints will be handled with strict confidentiality.

The names and details of the complainant, author, and reviewers will not be disclosed to unauthorized parties.

Records of complaints and resolutions will be securely stored by the editorial office.

8. Timelines

- Acknowledgment of receipt: within one working week.
- Preliminary review and investigation: within 15 days.
- Final written response: within 30 days (extensions allowed for complex cases).

The journal strives to resolve all appeals and complaints fairly and efficiently.

9. Post-Resolution Review

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome:

- They may request a review of the case by the publisher.
- The review decision will be final and communicated in writing.

- Persistent, repetitive, or malicious complaints without valid grounds may not be considered.

10. Ethical Oversight

The journal ensures that:

- All appeal and complaint procedures are in line with COPE Core Practices.
- The editorial team receives regular training on complaint handling and ethical decision-making.
- Records of complaints are periodically reviewed to improve transparency and editorial processes.

11. Policy Review and Updates

This Appeals and Complaints Policy is reviewed as required to ensure compliance with evolving ethical and editorial standards.

Revisions will be published on the journal's website, and all stakeholders will be informed of significant updates.