Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement

International Journal of SME Development (IJSMED)

(Published by SME Foundation, Bangladesh)

The *International Journal of SME Development (IJSMED)* upholds the highest standards of publication ethics and integrity. It follows the **Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)** guidelines and international best practices to ensure quality, fairness, and transparency in the publication process.
This statement outlines the ethical principles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the publication process, including editors, authors, reviewers, and the publisher (SME Foundation).

1. Duties of Editors:

1.1 Decision on Publication: The Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Board are responsible for deciding which articles/Case studies/ Review Papers submitted to the journal will be published based on their academic merit, originality, clarity, and relevance to the journal's scope.

1.2 Peer-review: The Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Board will ensure that the peer-review process is fair, unbiased and timely. Typically, each research article is reviewed by two (02) external and independent reviewers. When necessary, additional opinions may be sought. Reviewers are selected based on their expertise in the relevant field.

1.3 Fair Play: Articles are evaluated solely on their scholarly content without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, institutional affiliation, or nationality of the author(s).

1.4 Confidentiality: The editorial team must not disclose any information about a submitted article/articles to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, or the publisher as appropriate.

1.5 Conflict of Interest: Editors must recuse themselves from handling articles in which they have any conflicts of interest.

1.6 Ethical Oversight: The editors ensure that ethical issues such as plagiarism, data falsification, and duplicate publication are properly addressed.

1.7 The use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the journal editorial process: A submitted manuscript must be treated as a confidential document. Editors should not upload a submitted manuscript or any part of it into a generative AI tool as this may violate the authors' confidentiality and proprietary rights and, where the paper contains personally identifiable information, may breach data privacy rights.

2. Duties of Authors:

2.1 Originality and Acknowledgement of sources: The authors should ensure that they have written entirely original works, and if the authors have used the work and/or words of others, that this has been appropriately cited or quoted and permission has been obtained where necessary.

Proper acknowledgment of the work of others must always be given. Authors should cite publications that have influenced the reported work and that give the work appropriate context within the larger scholarly record. Information obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, must not be used or reported without explicit, written permission from the source.

Plagiarism takes many forms, from 'passing off' another's paper as the author's own paper, to copying or paraphrasing substantial parts of another's paper (without attribution), to claiming results from research conducted by others. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical behavior and is unacceptable.

2.2 Citations: Authors must cite relevant, reliable, and verifiable literature to support their claims. Key requirements include:

- Accurately cite all statements that rely on external sources.
- Use sources that can be verified through permanent identifiers (e.g., DOI).
- Avoid excessive self-citation or citation manipulation.
- Avoid citing multiple irrelevant sources for a single statement.

2.3 Data Access and retention: Authors may be asked to provide the research data supporting their paper for editorial review and/or to comply with the open data requirements of the journal. Authors must present accurate data and sufficient details. Fabrication or manipulation of data is unethical and unacceptable. Besides, Authors should be prepared to provide public access to such data, and should be prepared to retain such data for a reasonable number of years after publication.

2.4 Multiple, Redundant or Concurrent Publication: Authors must not submit the same manuscript to more than one journal simultaneously or publish the same research in multiple journals.

2.5 Authorship of the Paper: Authorship should be limited to individuals who have made significant contributions to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the study. The corresponding author is responsible for ensuring that all co-authors have approved the final version and agreed to its submission. Changes in authorship after submission will only be considered in exceptional cases and must be approved by all authors and the Editor.

2.6 Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest: Authors must disclose any financial or other conflicts of interest that could influence the results or interpretation of their work.

2.7 Fundamental Errors in Published Works: When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in their published work, they are obliged to promptly notify the Editor or Publisher to retract or correct the paper.

2.8 The use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the journal editorial process by the authors:

- Responsible Use: AI Tools may support manuscript preparation, but authors must verify the accuracy of AI-generated content, ensure proper attribution, and maintain data privacy.
- Disclosure: Any use of AI Tools in drafting a manuscript must be disclosed in a separate statement, including the tool's name, purpose, and the extent of human oversight. Basic grammar or formatting checks do not require disclosure.
- Figures and Artwork: AI-generated or AI-altered images are not permitted, except when integral to the research design. Any such use must be transparently described in the Methods section with proper attribution.

3. Duties of Reviewers:

3.1 Contribution to Editorial Decisions: Peer review assists the editorial team in making editorial decisions and helps authors improve their manuscripts.

3.2 Confidentiality: Reviewers must treat manuscripts as confidential documents and must not share, disclose or discuss them with others.

3.3 Citations: Reviewers should not suggest citations to the reviewer's (or their associates') work unless the suggested citations are for genuine scientific reasons. Citation recommendations should not be made with the intention of increasing the reviewer's citation count or enhancing the visibility of their work (or that of their associates). Requests for such citations can raise ethical concerns and may be seen as a conflict of interest or a source of bias.

To ensure transparency and enable editorial oversight, reviewers who suggest citations must provide complete bibliographic details and a clear justification for each recommended reference. Editors may remove citations that, in their view, are inappropriate from reviewer comments.

3.4 Standards of objectivity and competing interests: Reviews should be conducted objectively. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate, and reviewers should express their views clearly with supporting arguments. Reviewers should declare potential conflicts of interest to the editor before agreeing to review a manuscript and should discuss with the editor whether they need to recuse themselves because there may be a concern of potential bias. Examples of potential conflicts of interest include (but are not limited to) collaborations between the reviewer and author(s) in the previous three years, reviewers and author(s) who are based in the same institution, and reviewers and authors who have close personal relationships or associations.

3.5 The use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the journal editorial process by the Reviewers:

- Manuscripts under review are confidential and must not be uploaded into AI Tools, as this could compromise authors' rights or data privacy.
- Reviewers should not use AI Tools to assess scientific content, as critical evaluation requires human judgment.

4. Duties of Publisher (SME Foundation):

The *SME Foundation* ensures that:

- The publication system functions efficiently and supports ethical practices.
- Editorial decisions remain uninfluenced by commercial interests.
- All reasonable steps are taken to prevent and address publication misconduct.

In cases of confirmed misconduct (e.g., plagiarism or fraudulent publication), the publisher will collaborate with the Editorial Board to investigate and take corrective action such as correction, retraction, or removal.

Use of Generative AI by the Publisher:
The publisher may use AI-assisted tools to support technical and administrative processes, including:

- Checking submission completeness and guideline compliance.
- Conducting plagiarism and integrity checks.
- Supporting proofreading and copyediting tasks.

5. Ethical Oversight and Misconduct Handling:

- IJSMED takes all forms of academic misconduct seriously. Any allegation of research misconduct (plagiarism, data fabrication, authorship manipulation, or unethical research practices) will be thoroughly investigated by the Editorial Board.
- The journal uses plagiarism detection software (Turnitin/ iThenticate) to ensure the originality of submissions. Acceptable plagiarism/similarity limit excluding references is 15%.
- If ethical breaches are identified, the journal will follow COPE's guidelines in taking corrective measures, including rejection, retraction, or banning future submissions.

6. Open Access and Copyright Policy:

IJSMED follows an open access policy, ensuring that all published papers are freely accessible online without charge to readers.

By submitting the work, authors agree that the **SME Foundation reserves the right to archive, reproduce, distribute, and display the published content** in any form or media for academic and non-commercial purposes, ensuring wider dissemination of knowledge in support of SME development.

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7. Corrections, Retractions, withdrawal and Removal:

Corrections: Corrections will be issued when unintentional errors are identified that do not compromise the overall validity or conclusions of the work. Corrections may be initiated by the authors or by the editorial board and will be clearly linked to the original publication to ensure transparency and clarity for readers.

Retractions: A retraction will be issued if an article is found to include fabricated or falsified data, plagiarism, serious methodological flaws, or other violations of research or publication ethics. Each retraction notice will specify the reasons for retraction and the party responsible for initiating it. For transparency, the original article will remain accessible online with a visible watermark indicating its retracted status, along with a link to the official retraction notice. The journal follows the **Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Retraction Guidelines**.

Withdrawal: Articles may be withdrawn prior to publication if they are found to have been submitted in error, duplicate previously published work, or to contain issues arising during the production process. Withdrawn articles will not be included in the official record of publication.

Removal: Article removal will be considered only in rare and exceptional circumstances—such as when content is found to be defamatory, legally infringing, or posing potential risks to public health or safety. In such cases, a formal notice will replace the removed content, clearly stating the reason for the action taken.

These actions will be taken in accordance with COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) guidelines, and IJSMED will ensure transparency in all decisions.

8. Complaints and Appeals: Authors or readers may raise complaints related to editorial decisions, publication delays, or ethical concerns. Complaints will be handled professionally and confidentially by the Editorial Board following COPE's guidelines.

9. References: This statement is adapted in accordance with-

- *Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)*. Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors. https://publicationethics.org/
- *Elsevier Publishing Ethics Resource Kit (PERK)*. https://www.elsevier.com/editor/perk

10. Contact Information for Ethical Concerns:

To report ethical concerns or suspected misconduct, please contact:
Editorial Board, IJSMED
Email: *edboard.ijsmed@smef.gov.bd*

All reports will be treated confidentially and investigated thoroughly in accordance with the journal's ethical guidelines.