

**ADOPTION OF EDITORIAL POLICY BY JOURNAL EDITORIAL TEAM IN  
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA**

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**Abstract**

*This paper investigated the Adoption of Editorial Policies by Journal Editorial Team in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The objectives are to; find out the academic journals that have written editorial policy in ABU, Zaria; identify the extent at which editorial team use editorial policies in ABU, Zaria; uncover the percentage of similarity index accepted by Journal Editorial Team in ABU, Zaria; find out the journals' editorial team that use anti-plagiarism checker for article verification in ABU, Zaria. Quantitative methodology using Survey research design was adopted. The population comprised chief editors of all the existing journals in ABU, Zaria. There are 37 journals in A.B.U Zaria as at 2019. There was no sample for this study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The findings revealed that; almost all the editors do not have written editorial policy. It was also discovered that policy that encourages maximum transparency, complete and honest reporting is the most used. Declaring and publishing of funding sources of the research (clinical), policy on adding or removing an author of a submitted manuscript and screening of plagiarism, duplicate or redundant publication are least used. Most editors do not use Anti-plagiarism checker for article verification. Some journals do not have provision for any percentage of similarity index. The study concluded that there is possibility of publishing redundant/predatory articles by Journal editorial team in ABU Zaria. The study recommended that all the journals should have written policy, should be using ant plagiarism checker, should adopt all the editorial policies and have a minimum similarity index accepted from authors.*

**Keywords:** Editorial policy, Editorial team, Anti-plagiarism checker, similarity index, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

**Introduction**

Academic publishing is a means through which academics offer the output of their researches to the public. Most of the scholarly works are published in journals, conference proceedings, books, dissertations, or theses after peer review or editorial processes (Xiao & Askin, 2012). The avenues for publishing academic works largely depend on the field and sub-fields. Most established academic disciplines have their journals. It occurs in an environment of influential intellectual, financial, and sometimes in a situation where political interests may collide or compete. Right decisions and robust editorial processes designed to manage these interests foster a sustainable and efficient publishing system, which benefit academic societies, journal editors, authors, research funders, readers and publishers. Good publication practices do not develop by chance; they are established only by active promotion (Chris, Elizabeth, Alyson, Suzan, Diane, and Andrew, 2017).

It is obvious that, all academic journals have editorial team who are responsible for publishing and developing that journal. They are also called editorial board. For a journal to be healthy, vibrant and meets both author's and reader's expectations, Editorial Team must be energetic and proactive. Journals operate under the guidance of an Editorial Team; they provide expert advice on content, attract new authors, and encourage submissions. The

Editorial Team formation is done by incorporating global experts with excellent academic track record and expertise in the respective journal subject. Some of the wide variety of roles that Editorial Team can and should play include peer review, acting as journal ambassadors, and contributing to editorial strategy and journal development (Hill, n.d).

Policy is a statement of intents and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. It is generally adopted by the Board or senior government body within an organization. Hornby 1995 as cited in Lawal 2015 described a policy as plan of action or statement of ideals adopted by government or organization to guide operations. The question of whether or not an individual or group pattern of behavior is ideal depends to a large extent on the individual or groups, culture and religious beliefs. Committee on Publishing Ethics (COPE) is an international organization responsible for developing and maintaining policies and guidelines regarding the activities of publishing. COPE is a forum for editors and publishers of peer-reviewed journals to discuss issues related to the integrity of work submitted to or published in their journals. It supports and encourages editors to report, catalogue and instigate investigations. Several major publishers (including Elsevier, Wiley–Blackwell, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Palgrave Macmillan and Wolters Kluwer) have signed up their journals as COPE members. It has spread in more than 80 countries across the globe including UK and USA. Some of the element of policies developed by COPE are: adding or removing an author, handling journal's own staff publication, publishing of erratum or retraction, plagiarism screening, accepted similarity index among others.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Policy is a statement of intents and is implemented as a procedure or protocol for the operation of any academic journal. Adherence to these policies would sanitize and provide standard means of operations for the journals and editors. If eventually there will be change or adjustment in the editorial team, there will be no vacuum as regard to the journal as concern because there is mode of operation that guide all their activities. Despite these, the researcher observed that some of the journal editorial team in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria are not careful in using editorial policy. This instigated the motive behind conducting this study so as to investigate the Adoption of editorial policy by journal editorial team in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives are to:

1. Find out the academic journal that have written editorial policy in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
2. Identify the extent to which editorial team use editorial policies in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria
3. Uncover the percentage of similarity index accepted by Journal Editorial Team in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
4. Find out the journal editorial team that use anti plagiarism checker for article verification in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

### **Literature Review**

Policy is a statement of intents and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. It is generally adopted by the Board or senior government body within an organization. Hornby 1995 as cited in Lawal 2015 described a policy as plan of action or statement of ideals adopted by government or organization to guide operations. The question of whether or not

an individual or group pattern of behavior is ideal depends to a large extent on the individual or groups, culture and religious beliefs.

Editorial policy forms an essential aspect of the COPE Global Best Practice Guidelines and the following were identified by (Wager & Kleinert, 2015) for COPE members. They are;

### **General Editorial Policies**

Encourage maximum transparency and complete and honest reporting to advance knowledge in scholarly fields; it is crucial to understand why particular work was done, how it was planned and conducted and by whom, and what it adds to current knowledge. (Wager & Kleinert, 2015).

### **Authorship and Responsibility**

Wager and Kleinert, 2015 asserted that Journals should have a clear policy on authorship that follows the Global Practice Guidelines within the relevant field. When there are specific changes in authorship for appropriate reasons, editors should require that all authors (including any whose names are being removed from an author list) agree on these in writing. Editors should then act on the findings, for example, by correcting authorship in published papers.

### **Full and Honest Reporting and Adherence to Reporting Guidelines**

Among the most important responsibilities of editors is to maintain a high standard in the scholarly literature. Although best practice guidelines differ among journals, editors should work to ensure that all published papers make a substantial new contribution to their field. They should also require authors to adhere to relevant national and international laws and best practice guidelines where applicable, (Wager & Kleinert, 2015).

### **Screening of Plagiarism, Duplicate or Redundant Publication**

Plagiarism is a disease that needs to be killed to safeguard intellectual property. According to Association of Medical Editors (WAME) (2011) as cited in (Abad-García, 2018) ‘‘Plagiarism is the use of others’ published and unpublished ideas or words (or other intellectual property) without attribution or permission, and presenting them as new and original rather than derived from an existing source’’. Similarly, (COPE, 2015) as cited in (Abad-García, 2018) further defined plagiarism as the unreferenced use of others published and unpublished ideas under new authorship of a complete paper, sometimes in a different language. (Batane, 2010) asserted that plagiarism becomes a world challenge because of the introduction of World Wide Web and many electronic resources because it becomes more comfortable in copying text and pasting it in another place, unlike textbooks that one needs to read and then type.

### **Types of Plagiarism**

Turnitin, as a plagiarism checker company, identified the following as types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe as cited by (Abad-García, 2018). They are; Clone, Ctrl-C, Find-Replace, A remix, Recycle, Hybrid, Mashup, 404 Error, Aggregator and RE-Tweet.

Wager & Kleinert, 2015 declared that editors must consider screening for plagiarism, duplicate or redundant publication by using anti-plagiarism software, or for image manipulation. If plagiarism or fraudulent image manipulation is detected, this should be pursued with the authors and relevant institutions. Similarly, according to Sakamoto & Tsuda (2019) in their study titled ‘‘A Detection Method for Plagiarism Reports of Students’’

asserted that plagiarism has become a social problem which must be fought to stand still and therefore recommended the use of anti-plagiarism checker to convert the menace and discourage growing generations from indulging into the activities.

Conclusively, adopting the best policy to the activities of journal publishing will block any holes that might cause the downgrade in the integrity of the journal, its staff and its host institution. In Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, the adoption of such policies to the activities of journal publishing by the Editorial Team is not or rarely found. Therefore, this study intended to bridge that gap.

**Methodology**

The research methodology is quantitative and specifically survey research design. Aina (2004) asserted that survey research is a systematic and comprehensive collection of information that reflects the opinions, attitudes, feelings, beliefs and behaviors of people on an issue. The population of the study comprises of all the chief editors or any member of all the journal editorial team in Ahmadu Bello university, Zaria Nigeria, which are 37 in number that made publication between 2015 to 2020, because the population was not large, whole population were used. The questionnaire was used as instrument for collecting data. It was found useful because of its advantages and it is more economical in terms of time, effort and cost.

**Result and Discussion**

From the 37 copies of questionnaire distributed, only 30 are filled and returned which found to be enough for the presentation and discussion of findings. The findings are:

**Having Written Editorial Policy**

**TABLE 1 WRITTEN EDITORIAL POLICY**

S/NO	Having Written Editorial Policy	Freq.	Percentage
1	YES	9	30%
2	NO	19	63%

Table 1 above indicates that 19 respondents representing 63% do not have written editorial policies upon which they use in carrying out the editorial activities while nine respondents representing 30% have, the remaining 2 (7%) were silent about the question. However, from the follow-up interview by the researcher, almost all the editors interviewed confirmed that they do not have. It is just like modus operandi, which is known to everyone but was not documented. This finding contradicted the provision of Global Best Practice Guidelines as identified by (Wager & Kleinert, 2015), JPPS (2018) and Cumming & Harris (2018) which require the existence of, and adherence to the policy on different issues including handling the article presented by either the staff of the journal own department or the member of the editorial team. Lack of written editorial policy is disastrous in case of editorial team leadership transition from one set to another. This challenge may lead to inconsistency in the journal operation.

Extent of Editorial Policy Usage by Journal Editors in A.B.U Zaria

TABLE 2 Extent of Editorial Policy Use

S/NO	Editorial policies	Extent of Use					TOTAL	MEAN	SD
		Highly Used	Used	Rarely used	Not used	Undecided			
		FREQ	FREQ	FREQ	FREQ	FREQ			
a.	The policy that encourages maximum transparency and complete and honest reporting	18	10	0	1	1	30	4.43	0.79
b.	Policy on adding or removing author of a submitted manuscript	6	6	1	15	2	30	1.97	1.13
c.	Declaring and publishing of funding sources of the research (clinical)	3	5	2	18	2	30	1.63	0.66
d.	Ensuring that all published papers make a substantial new contribution to their field	10	17	1	1	1	30	3.13	1.14
e.	Avoiding predatory, duplicate or redundant publication	16	9	1	3	1	30	3.20	1.10
f.	Screening of plagiarism, duplicate or redundant publication by using anti-plagiarism software.	11	6	1	11	1	30	2.50	1.12

Table 2 shows the extent of editorial policy usage with the policy that encourages maximum transparency and complete and honest reporting having the highest mean value of 4.43. Similarly, Declaring and publishing of funding sources of the research (clinical) with the least mean value of 1.63. This finding could be so because it applies to only clinical research which has only three journals from the selected population. Policy on adding or removing author of a submitted manuscript has 1.97 mean value which signifies that the journals using this policy as far as Ahmadu Bello University Journals as concern are few. Screening of plagiarism, duplicate or redundant publication by using anti-plagiarism software also has 2.50 mean value which signifies that it is on the negative side.

From the above-analyzed data, the implication is that most journals have no policy on adding or removing authors which is very important in most international journals and databases

where even the individual contribution to the conceptualization of the article submitted must be presented, and they call it authorship statement. In the follow-up interview also, when the researcher asked some editors what do the journal plan to do in case of any mistake in the already published paper, the responses were no action taken because the journal is already released out but would be very careful in the future publications. Most of the journals have never published a retraction or erratum on any article already published. When asked, has any article writer complain about the authors in the publication? The reply was that most or all the complaints are not written; therefore, no action can be taken.

Another implication for the above-analyzed data is that most journal editors do not screen the articles using anti-plagiarism software. This finding will pave the way for the publication of the redundant articles, especially that in table 4.7, most journals are visible online with more than 50%. It is evident that avoiding redundant and predatory publication is almost impossible without the use of any machinery.

**Percentage of Plagiarism Accepted**

**TABLE 3 Percentage of Plagiarism Accepted**

S/NO	PERCENTAGE	FREQ	PERCENTAGE
1	Below 10%	1	3%
2	11 to 15%	2	7%
3	16 to 20%	9	30%
4	21 to 25%	5	17%
5	26 to 30%	2	7%
6	No provision for that	11	37%

Table 2 presents the percentage of Plagiarism accepted by the editors compared to the authors' contribution to the article submitted. Most editors in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, have no any provision for the accepted citations Plagiarism with 11 representing 37% while 16% to 20% accepted Plagiarism followed with the frequency of 9 representing 30%. Similarly, 26% to 30%, 11%-15% and 10% and below record the least responses of 1, and 2 to each between 11%-15% and 26%-30%. This finding implies that some journals do not have provision for any percentage of similarity index which confirm the findings of table 2 above.

**Use of Anti-plagiarism Checker for Article Verification**

**TABLE 4 Use of Anti-plagiarism Checker for Article Verification**

S/NO	ANTI-PLAGIARISM CHECK	Freq.	Percentage
1	YES	12	40%
2	NO	18	60%

Table 4 above indicates the use of anti-plagiarism checker for article verification by the editors in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Most editors do not use Anti-plagiarism checker for article verification with the frequency of 18 representing 60% while only 12 (40%) of the editors are using the software for article verification to ascertain the originality and authors' contributions before publishing the submitted articles. This finding implies that only a few of the editors are using it. However, from the follow-up interview by the researcher when he further asked the editors about their plan, most of them revealed their plan to start using it soon. The software some of the editors plan to use are Turnitin and advanced Grammarly while others only declare their intention to start using it without stating the specification and

the time. In the real sense from the researchers understanding in his discussion with the editors, most of the journals are not using a plagiarism checker. This finding is contrary to the stand of (Wager & Kleinert, 2015) who believed in using anti-plagiarism checker in article verification. It has also corresponded with the recommendation of (Sakamoto & Tsuda, 2019) in their studies on A Detection Method for Plagiarism Reports of Students where they recommended the use of plagiarism checker in order to curb the menace of plagiarism among students and faculty members.

### **Summary of the Findings**

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the following were the summary of the findings:

1. The majority (63%) of the editorial team in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria lack of written editorial policy.
2. That the policy that mostly adopted from the COPE developed policies by the editors in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, is the policy that encourages maximum transparency and complete and honest reporting with 4.43 mean value.
3. That Most editors (37%) in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, have no any provision for the accepted percentage of similarity index accepted for publication.
4. The findings also revealed that most editors (60%) do not use anti-plagiarism checker for article verification.

### **Conclusion**

From the results and discussion of the findings, it could be concluded that there tendency for the journals in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to publish redundant or duplicate articles because of non-checking of plagiarism and in case of editorship transition, the possibility of having clash of interest is high because there was no written policy that guides their operations.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. The journal Editorial Team in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria should have written editorial policy that will serve as a guide in case of leadership transition.
2. The journal Editorial Team in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria should also put policies in place for handling authorship conflict for adding or removing an author. This policy will solve problems of snatching an article where an individual writes an article and give to a colleague to vet and pay for the publication. Still, at the end, that second colleague will use his name as the first author without the consent of the original contributor. If this policy is in place, this type of problem will be reduced to the barest minimum.
3. The journal Editorial Team in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria should also employ the use of anti-plagiarism software checker for article verification. Turnitin, advanced Grammarly and of recent eagle scan are some of the software to use, among others.
4. The journal Editorial Team in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria should have minimum bench mark of similarity index accepted form the article writers. Maximum of 25% could be accepted. Anything above 25%, the article should be rejected to the author. This will encourage originality among researchers.

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