

Ethics in communication research paper

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Discuss scientific communication from an ethical perspective and how the scientific community attempts to monitor the information that is communicated.

Scientific studies contribute to the growth of information in different fields. In the scientific community, the publication of a research study serves as the culmination of months, even years of hard work. Becoming a published author is a requirement for any scholar to remain credible in his field. His reputation expands not only by publishing more studies but also from being cited by other authors conducting related studies of their own.

Scholarly journals have specific criteria that authors need to satisfy before their works are accepted for publication. Even before reaching this stage, scientists and scholars go through a rigorous process to be able to conduct their studies. Research ethics consultation services (RECS) have been established in academic medical institutions to address this need.

Each published article becomes part of databases which are frequently referred to by other scholars who are conducting their own investigations of related topics. At present, the digitization of journal articles and open access publishing have become instrumental in increasing the public's access to scholarly studies. This mode provides authors with a new platform to communicate their ideas to their target audience. Scientific journals have become widely accessible and authors are able to present the results of their hard work to more people. However, such increased access has also identified flaws in scientific publication. A study by Grieneisen & Zhang (2012) showed that there were close to 5,000 scholarly publications who have retracted articles and 47 percent of these cases are due to alleged

publishing misconduct.

Donev (2013) identifies three of the most serious forms of dishonesty or fraud in the publishing of scientific information. These are fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. Fabrication refers to making up the results, even inventing the data itself that are the basis of the results. Falsification is changing or altering the results of the research. Plagiarism is claiming the ideas of others as one's own. This includes self-plagiarism, meaning not giving due citations to one's ideas already presented in another or previously published work. Double publication or duplicate publication is also grouped together with plagiarism.

Ways to monitor scientific information

The scientific community has established ways of monitoring the manner by which scientific information is communicated to the public. They are doing this because fraud and dishonesty in scientific studies have a negative impact in the different fields, such as in the medical field, natural sciences, or social sciences. At least three ways of monitoring scientific communication is discussed in the succeeding sections.

RECS. The establishment of research ethics communication services or RECS resulted from informal discussions among peers and colleagues during the research design stage of medical studies. As scholars finalize their research designs and research protocols, they consult with their colleagues and consult experts in their fields, especially in the aspect of handling human subjects. The tasks of the ethics consultants from RECS would be to “provide information; identify, analyze, and/or deliberate about ethical issues; and recommend a course of action” (Beskow et al, 2009 as cited in

<https://assignbuster.com/ethics-in-communication-research-paper/>

McCormick et al, 2013). The RECS are helpful in ensuring ethics protocols are followed. When researchers abide by ethical principles they face less chances of misconduct during their research activities at the university level and more importantly, when they are already conducting their studies as professionals in the various disciplines. Having the RECS in the academe is a welcome support for researchers and beginning scientists.

Peer Reviews. The credibility of a scientific study is vouched by its publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Nielsen (2013) maintains that peer review is highly respected within the science community and in the public. He explains that scientific communication is about competition for recognition. When a scholar or scientist conducts a study, the highest form of recognition he can attain for such activity is the publication of his work. By becoming a published author, the scientist communicates the results of his study to his peers and to a wider audience. The publication stage leads the way to recognition. When the article has become open to the public the scientists participates in the competition process with all other scientists who have made their works available to a wider audience.

There are many different platforms to communicate the findings generated by one's study. Periodicals, websites and journals are the most common ones. Different disciplines have their own journals through which practitioners of their discipline are able to share hard facts and experts opinion. Among these different publications, the peer-reviewed journals are the most credible. In the peer-review situation, an author would submit his work to the editor of the journal and then the review committee would check the processes that the study has gone through. They would look into the

methodology utilized by the scientist in conducting the study. There are criticisms of peer-review, and these include favoring articles that would perpetuate the status quo and protecting specific turfs. It has also been said that this process often fails to identify fraud or errors and instead brings in biases to the processes in the publication (Glasser, 2014). Despite these negative outlooks on peer-review, this strategy has been accepted by authors and members of the scientific community as a standard in the dissemination of scientific information. Beginning in the academe, the peer-review is regarded as the gold standard in establishing one's credibility as a published author. The peer-review allows competition among members of the scientific community. Such mechanism also makes it possible for members of the scientific community to investigate the legitimacy of researchers' findings. Surviving the peer-review process is a feat in itself because this translates into the author's credibility. Appearing in a peer-review journal communicates the message that one's work is legitimate and the processes undertaken by the researcher are valid, reliable, and accurate. Studies that are not given approval during the peer review may have problems in their methodologies, authorizations, or in the data they have generated. The reviewers would also be making sure that the researchers have not violated ethical principles during the research process and the report-writing period.

Retractions. Articles or published studies investigated for fraud such as plagiarism are candidates for retraction. In the study of Van Noordeen (2011), about journal retractions in the past 35 years, the number of retractions has risen considerably in the last three decades, although most

are from the lower impact journals. Misconduct has the highest percentage in terms of reason for the retraction. Misconduct includes fabrication, self-plagiarism, and plagiarism (Van Noorden, 2011). The editorial committee and the management of the journals issue retractions to maintain the credibility of their journals. According to the editor-in-chief of Journal of Neuroscience, the number of retractions are actually less than what should have been. As editor of the journal, this person conducts ethics investigations at the journal (Van Noorden, 2011).

Retraction is very detrimental to the author's career because his integrity is questioned. In instances when there are evidence of plagiarism, an author can lose possible study grants and may even lose his job. Other journals may also doubt his integrity and this situation has a negative impact for the author's future publications. Although there are cases of unconscious plagiarism (Stark & Perfect, 2008), once an author is investigated for plagiarism, there is always the possibility of having his work retracted from the journal.

Conclusions

Scientific communication requires the implementation of ethical principles. Scholars and scientists conduct studies, surveys, and experiments and share such information to a wider audience through the publication of their work. Appearing in peer-reviewed journals is an affirmation of years of hard work and a recognition of a scientist's or scholar's professional competence. Being a published author brings with it the responsibility of maintaining proper conduct in conducting research and writing reports. The scientific community has mechanisms to ensure credibility and accuracy of scientific information.

RECS, peer reviews, and retractions are only three of the ways that are existing today to maintain ethical principles in scientific communication.

References

- Donev, D. (2013). Principles and ethics in scientific communication in Biomedicine. *Acta Informatica Medica*, 21 (4): 228-233. 10. 5455/aim. 2013. 21. 228-233.
- Grieneisen, M. & Zhang, M. (2012). A comprehensive survey of retracted articles from the scholarly literature. *PLoS One*, 7 (10): e44118. doi: 10. 1371/journal. pone. 0044118
- McCormick, J. B., Sharp, R. R., Ottenberg, A. L., Reider, C. R., Taylor, H. A. & Wilfond, B. S. (2013). The establishment of Research Ethics Consultation Services (RECS): An Emerging Research Resource
- Nielsen, K. (2013). Scientific Communication and the Nature of Science. *Science & Education*, 22(9), 2067-2086. doi: 10. 1007/s11191-012-9475-3.
- Stark, L. & Perfect, T. (2008). The effects of idea collaboration on unconscious plagiarism. *Memory and Cognition*, 36 (1): 65-73.
- Van Noorden, R. (2011). The trouble with retractions. *Nature*, 478 : 26-28.