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Article

Ethical Aspects of Publishing Educational Texts and Publications

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Abstract: How can we ensure publishing ethics in the digital age? In an age where information travels at the speed of light, ethical publishing is essential to maintain the credibility and quality of content. Academics, students and practitioners face challenges such as protecting copyright and ensuring transparency. Drawing on theoretical research and, in particular, qualitative analysis of theoretical sources, the research aim of this paper is to reflect on what practical recommendations and key principles can help deliver valuable content and avoid ethical pitfalls. Educating the academic community about the meaning and protection of copyright, licensing, transparency and moral responsibility of authors and peer-reviewed scientific publications seems crucial. The ethical aspects of publishing educational texts and publications are pillars for ensuring quality and credibility. Copyright protection and fair licensing form the basis that promotes transparency and fairness. The need for academics and students to be encouraged to reflect on ethical challenges and contribute to sustainable publishing seems essential. The findings of this theoretical research can serve as feedback for publishers of scholarly and educational texts and as insights for setting publishing standards.

Keywords: copyright; licensing; peer review; transparency; moral responsibility; plagiarism

1. Introduction

Ethical aspects of publishing educational texts and publications are pillars for ensuring quality and credibility [1]. However, we need to reflect on how publishing ethics can be ensured in the digital age. The current era is specific in that information spreads at the speed of light. Undoubtedly, ethical publishing is the basis for maintaining the credibility and quality of content. Academics, students and practitioners face challenges such as protecting copyright and ensuring transparency. The authors of this paper have reflected on this issue and have set a research objective: to identify the main ethical aspects related to the publication of educational texts and publications. As this is a purely theoretical topic based on publishing practices and ethical principles, the main research method chosen was a qualitative analysis of scholarly texts from respected databases such as Web of Science, Scopus and Open Access, where an extensive search of relevant sources was conducted, followed by a comparison and qualitative selection [2]. Based on the above, this publication can be classified as theoretical research. In order to achieve the stated research objective, the authors asked the following research questions: 1. *What are the legal aspects of publishing?* 2. *What is the moral responsibility of authors?* 3. *What is the importance of peer review?* 4. *What are the aspects of the conflict of interest problem?* 5. *Other ethical aspects of the topic under study and possible future trends related to digitization?* Based on the qualitative analysis and answering the research questions, it can be concluded that the research objective has been fulfilled by accepting the following thesis. Important legal aspects of publishing include, in particular, respect and protection of copyright, consistent licensing and distribution. The moral responsibility of authors is an essential part of the publishing process and includes in particular transparency and honesty, while striving to ensure the quality of published content and avoid plagiarism, with all the consequences it entails and the legal and moral responsibilities associated with it. The peer review process is a key element in maintaining the quality of published texts and the peer review team plays a crucial role in it. In particular, transparency of the process is a fundamental prerequisite for a fair peer review process. Data protection is a fundamental ethical

requirement that cannot be overlooked in the publication process. Ensuring accessibility and fairness in publishing is essential for equal access to educational and scholarly resources. Digitisation offers unique opportunities for the dissemination of information, but it also brings ethical challenges. The rapid distribution of materials increases the availability of knowledge, but also raises copyright issues. The future of ethical publishing is likely to be influenced by the development of technologies such as blockchain, which bring a new level of transparency. These technologies can provide an immutable record of authorship and review history. Another important trend is to promote inclusivity and diversity in academia. Last but not least, the concept of open science is also developing, encouraging the sharing of data and research results to the general public. Educating the academic community about the meaning and protection of copyright, licensing, transparency and moral responsibility of authors, and, for scientific publications, peer review, seems to be key. The ethical aspects of publishing educational texts and publications are pillars for ensuring quality and credibility.

2. Materials and Methods

The basic scientific method of this thesis is theoretical research and qualitative analysis of theoretical sources. Scientific articles and, to a lesser extent, professional monographs were selected as material through a systematic search. This research and subsequent qualitative analysis involves searching for relevant sources in representative databases such as Web of Science, Scopus and Open Access, studying them, then comparing, selecting and applying the ideas studied [2]. Taking into account the theoretical ethical-philosophical focus of the publication, the authors chose an outline divided into logical subsections. This style of presentation is appropriate when creating a publication of the results of theoretical research [3]. The organization of the Results chapter is chosen chronologically, according to the set research questions, which are presented in the Introduction chapter.

3. Results

Copyright is the cornerstone of intellectual property protection, providing authors with control over their works [4]. It is crucial for any academic to be familiar with the rights and obligations that this protection entails. This includes not only the ability to make decisions about the use of the work, but also protection against unauthorized misuse or attribution of the work to others. Identification of the author is essential for proper attribution, especially in the context of publishing educational texts [5].

Modern digital technologies significantly facilitate the distribution and copying of texts, which poses new challenges for copyright protection [6]. Authors and publishers have various technological tools at their disposal, such as digital watermarks or content encryption [7]. These tools help to protect works from unauthorized distribution and ensure that authors remain the owners of their works. It is this protection that enables the integrity and value of intellectual heritage to be preserved in the digital age.

Legal awareness and education are an essential part of copyright protection. Authors should actively monitor current changes in intellectual property to avoid inadvertent infringement [8]. Educating the academic community about the importance and protection of copyright is key to promoting ethical publishing. Creating a safe and fair environment for authors means maintaining a high standard of scholarly and academic work, which is essential for future generations.

Licensing is an essential means of managing the distribution and use of educational texts [9]. Through sophisticated licensing strategies, authors can set the conditions under which their works can be used. Different types of licenses, such as Creative Commons, allow authors to flexibly decide how their work can be used [10]. In this way, licensing not only protects copyright but also promotes knowledge sharing and academic collaboration.

The distribution of educational texts has become easier than ever before thanks to digitization [11]. Electronic publishing enables the instantaneous distribution of texts worldwide, which brings new challenges in the area of content protection. Authors and publishers are now faced with the

decision of how to distribute their work to comply with legal standards. Adequate licensing can effectively prevent unauthorized copying and misuse of texts, thereby protecting their value [12].

Transparency in licensing and distribution is key to maintaining trust between authors, publishers and readers. Clearly defined licensing terms help prevent misunderstandings and legal disputes. Authors should be informed in detail about licensing options so that they can effectively protect their works. A properly chosen license not only protects the rights of authors but also facilitates the dissemination of knowledge, which is essential in the world of ethical publishing [13].

Transparency and honesty are key when publishing scientific texts. Authors must openly disclose all aspects that have influenced their work, including methodology and sources used. It is also important to acknowledge any potential conflicts of interest that could undermine the objectivity of their research. These practices ensure that readers can trust the information provided [14].

It is essential that the authors ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data presented. Careful checks and revisions minimize the risk of errors or bias, which is essential in an academic setting [15]. Lack of transparency can lead to serious consequences such as loss of credibility or reputation. Transparency also promotes better understanding and the ability to replicate research, which is crucial for scientific progress.

Institutions and publishers play an important role in promoting transparent and fair practices. They should set clear standards and guidelines for the publication of all relevant data and sources. Providing training and resources will help authors understand the importance of these practices. In this way, authors can contribute to responsible publishing that promotes trust and integrity in the scientific community [16].

Ensuring the quality of content is a cornerstone of the moral responsibility of authors when publishing educational texts. Quality content begins with careful research and thorough analysis of the data necessary to formulate credible conclusions. Authors should ensure that their work is accurate, up-to-date, and relevant to the target readership [17]. Such an approach not only enhances the credibility of the authors but also increases their authority in the professional community.

The review process plays a key role in ensuring the quality of content. Involving expert reviewers who provide an independent perspective helps to identify potential shortcomings and suggest improvements. Authors should be open to critical comments and ready to optimize their text based on constructive feedback [18]. This approach ensures that the publication meets the high standards and expectations of readers, which is essential for success in academia.

Institutions and publishers have an important role to play in promoting the quality of content, which they can ensure by setting clear standards and offering training to authors. Such initiatives help authors develop their skills and awareness of best practices in publishing [19]. Promoting quality content is key to maintaining the integrity and credibility of the scientific and academic environment, ensuring that readers receive valuable and accurate information.

Plagiarism remains a serious breach of ethical and legal standards that can have far-reaching consequences not only for authors but also for academic institutions. It is the unauthorized appropriation of another's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, which undermines the integrity of scientific research [20]. Authors must ensure accurate citation and adherence to academic standards to maintain their reputation and credibility.

The consequences of plagiarism are often severe and can include disciplinary sanctions, loss of academic degrees and even legal consequences [21]. Academic institutions are therefore implementing plagiarism detection tools to help identify misattributed work. Authors should be familiar with these tools and follow the established rules to promote ethical standards and protect their intellectual property.

Education in ethics and proper citation is an important part of plagiarism prevention. Academic institutions should offer training to help authors understand the importance of ethical publishing and good citation practices. This not only protects the rights of the original authors but also strengthens the overall credibility of the academic community [22]. Prevention of plagiarism is crucial to promote originality and innovation in research, which is a cornerstone for the advancement of knowledge.

Reviewers are an essential component in the process of academic publishing, whose main task is to ensure the quality and reliability of texts. They carefully evaluate the content, methodology and relevance of submitted papers, providing valuable suggestions for improvement to the authors. In doing so, they contribute to scientific knowledge by pointing out deficiencies and suggesting modifications that can strengthen the overall contribution of the work [23].

Reviewers also play a key role in maintaining ethical standards. They are required to identify possible plagiarism or ethical lapses, which is essential to maintain the integrity of the scientific process. Their independent and objective assessment ensures that publications meet the appropriate ethical and professional standards that are essential in academia [24]. This contributes to the credibility and respectability of the scientific community.

In addition to evaluating content, reviewers provide constructive feedback to authors, which is crucial for young scientists. Through critiques and suggestions, they help authors to better present their ideas and improve the quality of their texts. This support not only ensures the quality of published papers, but also promotes the professional growth of authors, thus contributing to the advancement of the sciences [25].

A transparent peer review process is key to maintaining trust in the scientific community and ensuring fair evaluation of papers. Clear rules and expectations allow all stakeholders to better understand the review criteria and timeframes. This openness ensures that the process remains fair and unbiased [26]. It is important that all steps and procedures are clear to avoid misunderstandings that could undermine trust in the overall system.

Open communication between reviewers and authors is an effective way to improve transparency. When authors know the status of their papers and have access to the reasons for the reviewers' recommendations, it strengthens their trust in the process. Reviewers and editors must be impartial and consistently avoid conflicts of interest that could bias the results of the review. A system set up in this way not only improves the quality of publications but also improves trust in the academic environment [27].

Technology fundamentally supports the transparency of the review process. Online systems allow authors and reviewers to track the status of the review process, minimising delays and ensuring a smooth process. These tools contribute to increasing the efficiency of the whole process. Transparency in this way not only improves the quality of scientific publishing but also strengthens trust in the academic community. Thus, technology plays a key role in ensuring fair and efficient evaluation [28].

Identifying and managing conflicts of interest in publishing is a key ethical aspect that fundamentally affects the credibility of scientific research. Conflicts can arise when the personal or financial interests of participants conflict with their professional responsibilities, which can bias their decision-making [29]. It is essential to identify and address these interests to ensure objectivity and impartiality throughout the publication process.

The first step towards effective conflict resolution is to identify conflicts transparently. Authors, reviewers and editors should openly declare all potential conflicts of interest before the review process begins. In this way, editorial teams can take measures to minimize the impact of these conflicts. Appointing independent reviewers is one way to ensure that the review remains objective and professional [30].

Conflict management also involves the development and adherence to clear ethical guidelines within institutions [31]. These guidelines should be updated regularly and include specific steps for identifying and resolving conflicts. Effective resolution not only enhances trust in the publication process but also contributes to maintaining high standards of scientific integrity. This is crucial for advancing and maintaining the credibility of scientific knowledge.

Data protection is a key ethical requirement that cannot be overlooked in the publishing process. With the growing influence of digital technology and more data sharing, it is essential to comply with legislation such as GDPR. This includes not only the protection of identifiable data but also the anonymisation of data where possible [32]. This not only protects research participants but also strengthens trust in published content.

In scientific publications, authors must obtain informed and freely given consent from research participants for the use of their data. Careful consideration should be given to which data are necessary for publication and which can be omitted, thereby minimising the risk of invasion of privacy. If it is necessary to include sensitive information, it is essential to ensure that it is adequately protected [33].

Institutions and publishers should regularly review and update privacy guidelines. These guidelines should include training for authors and reviewers to make them aware of their responsibilities and risks. Effective data protection not only protects research participants but also promotes trust in ethical standards [34]. It is essential for maintaining a high level of scientific integrity and credibility.

Ensuring accessibility and fairness in publishing is essential for equal access to educational and scientific resources. Without equitable access, social and economic disparities can widen, which runs counter to the principles of educational equity. For example, students from developing countries often face difficulties in accessing paid academic journals and databases, which limits their opportunities for study and research. This unequal access can leave a deep mark on educational outcomes and contribute to inequality on a global scale [35].

Initiatives such as open access publishing seek to improve this situation by allowing free access to scientific papers. This increases the availability of knowledge and strengthens global collaboration [36]. However, the open access model also brings challenges. It is essential to secure funding to maintain the quality of publications and to prevent the emergence of "predatory" journals that may abuse the model to publish low-quality work [37]. Such journals can damage the credibility of the scientific community and upset the balance between quality and accessibility.

Equity in publishing includes the representation of diverse voices and perspectives in academic discourse. Publications should reflect different cultural and social contexts so that authors from different backgrounds have equal opportunities to share their research. It is important to support authors from minority groups and ensure that their work is not marginalized or ignored [38]. Fairer access to publishing contributes to a richer and more inclusive academic environment where diversity becomes a key source of innovation and progress.

Digitization has significantly changed the way we publish educational texts. It offers unique opportunities for disseminating information, but it also brings ethical challenges. The rapid distribution of materials increases the availability of knowledge, but also raises questions about copyright. Digital copies can easily be shared without the authors' permission, which threatens their work and income [39]. The protection of intellectual property thus becomes a key issue that needs to be carefully monitored.

Online publishing also raises privacy issues. It is important to ensure that the personal data of authors and readers are protected from unauthorised access. Modern technologies such as data mining can provide valuable insights for improving services, but also raise ethical and privacy concerns [40]. Publishers and institutions must continually balance innovation with protecting the rights of individuals to remain ethically responsible.

Digitisation is also changing how scientific knowledge is evaluated and disseminated. Algorithms can speed up information processing, which is beneficial, but there is also a risk of bias. Incorrect algorithms can spread misinformation, which is a concern [41]. Therefore, content creators and platforms must adhere to ethical standards and ensure that the digital environment promotes transparency and trustworthiness. Only in this way can digital publishing become a reliable resource for education and science.

The future of ethical publishing is likely to be influenced by the development of technologies such as blockchain that bring a new level of transparency [42]. These technologies can provide an immutable record of authorship and review history. This increases trust in academic publications and reduces the risk of plagiarism or tampering with the text [43]. With each step forward, these tools are becoming crucial for ethical publishing.

Another important trend is to promote inclusivity and diversity in academia. Publishers strive to ensure that different voices and perspectives are fairly represented. This effort includes supporting

authors from diverse cultural and geographic backgrounds. Such efforts not only broaden the range of research but also increase its global relevance. Promoting gender equity and minority representation is also a key factor, which contributes to a more equitable academic environment [44].

Last but not least, new publishing projects and frameworks are being developed, such as Open Science. This approach facilitates collaboration between scientists and increases the efficiency of the scientific process [45]. However, Open Science places new demands on ethical frameworks that must protect sensitive data and ensure the quality of the information shared. In the future, these trends will play a crucial role in shaping an ethical and responsible approach to publishing.

4. Discussion

Transparency at all stages of the process is essential for ethical publishing. This includes communicating with authors, reviewers and readers about the criteria and evaluation process. A transparent process not only enhances credibility but also promotes fair evaluation of papers. Clear information about potential conflicts of interest is essential to ensure credibility. Quality and integrity of content must be a priority. Authors should adhere to ethical standards in the presentation of their results. This means that they should cite sources correctly and avoid plagiarism. Accurate presentation of results is essential to maintain confidence in published content. Publishers should have clear rules for selecting papers and providing constructive feedback to authors. Promoting diversity and inclusion is key. Publishers should seek different perspectives and support authors from different cultural backgrounds. This includes equal opportunities for authors from different ethnic and geographic backgrounds. Such an approach enriches academic discourse and enhances the relevance of publications in a global context. The published topic of ethical aspects of publishing educational texts and publications is already represented in respected databases. However, these are very often papers that focus on single aspects, such as peer review, as in the article by Hidoury et al. [46], or the theory of aspects of the publication process and rules, or parts of it, as in the article by M. Kilduff [47]. The work presented here is unique precisely because of its focus on the ethical aspects of the issue under study and, in comparison with, for example, the work of the author T. A. Saurin [48], it is particularly distinguished by the comprehensiveness of the view of the issue under study, i.e. from an ethical point of view. Other authors, such as McAlpine et al. [49], or Isaacs et al. [50], focus on the ethics of publishing in specific fields; in contrast to these publications, this work is characterized by its comprehensive view and universal focus. The contribution of the presented publication is also the prediction of the future development of the studied problem. It is quite logical to have a controversy about the relevance of the presented prediction, but with the support of current technological trends in the publication process, the premise of the growing importance of digitalization and technologies such as Blockchain can be defended quite successfully. Concepts such as open science, which promotes the sharing of data and research results to the general public, are growing in importance for global access to scientific knowledge and research results.

5. Conclusions

The ethical aspects of publishing educational texts and publications are pillars for ensuring quality and credibility. Copyright protection and fair licensing form the basis that promotes transparency and fairness. Academics and students must be guided to reflect on ethical challenges and contribute to sustainable publishing. In order to identify specific ethical aspects, the authors of the present paper set a research objective: to identify the main ethical aspects related to the publication of educational texts and publications. To achieve this research objective, the following research questions were posed: 1. *What are the legal aspects of publishing?* 2. *What is the moral responsibility of authors?* 3. *What is the importance of peer review?* 4. *What are the aspects of the conflict of interest problem?* 5. *Other ethical aspects of the topic under study and possible future trends related to digitization?* Based on the qualitative analysis and the answers to the research questions, it can be concluded that the research objective has been fulfilled and the following thesis can be accepted. Important legal aspects of publishing include in particular respect and protection of copyright, consistent licensing and distribution. Moral responsibility of authors is an essential part of the

publishing process. The peer review process is a key element in maintaining the quality of published texts, and the collective of reviewers plays a crucial role in this process. In particular, transparency of the process is a fundamental prerequisite for a fair peer review process. Data protection is a fundamental ethical requirement that cannot be overlooked in the publication process. Ensuring accessibility and fairness in publishing is essential for equal access to educational and scholarly resources. Digitisation offers unique opportunities for the dissemination of information, but it also brings ethical challenges. The rapid distribution of materials increases the availability of knowledge, but also raises copyright issues. The future of ethical publishing is likely to be influenced by the development of technologies that bring a new level of transparency. Another important trend is to promote inclusivity and diversity in academia. Educating the academic community about the meaning and protection of copyright, licensing, transparency and the moral responsibility of authors is essential. The findings of this theoretical research can serve as feedback for publishers of scholarly and educational texts and as insights for setting publishing standards. Future follow-up research should review the current state of play and the new ethical considerations brought about by the introduction of new technologies and standards for global sharing of research results and knowledge.

Author Contributions: For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used “Conceptualization, L.R.; methodology, L.R.; software, J.L.; validation, J.L. and L.R.; formal analysis, L.R.; investigation, J.L.; resources, L.R.; data curation, L.R.; writing—original draft preparation, L.R.; writing—review and editing, J.L.; visualization, L.R.; supervision, J.L.; project administration, L.R.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.”

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