



Simultaneous Submission of Journal Article: A Serious Author Misconduct

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ABSTRACT

Simultaneous submission refers to the practice of submitting a manuscript that is already submitted and still under consideration at another journal. Almost all journals have a clear policy to not submit any manuscript simultaneously and force authors to send each manuscript to one journal at a time. Despite the set and well-known policy, it seems that the authors are enjoying to breach the publication ethics. In many cases, authors might be hoping to speed up the publishing process by sending out the same paper to multiple journals simultaneously. However, by doing so they actually slow down the overall editorial publishing process by consuming editorial resources from many journals to the same single paper and damaging the whole community. Sometimes simultaneous submissions get detected as they end up with simultaneous publication and sometimes it gets caught by reviewer or editors if by chance the same individual gets assigned by both journals however it's very rare. When such misconduct of simultaneous submission detected editor takes appropriate ethical action however in my opinion such detections are less than 1% of total simultaneous misconducts happening. More than 99% simultaneous submission went undetected and such authors destroying precious editorial resources silently without getting caught. In this article, my focus is on such silent destroyers which can be prevented with a collaborative approach of watching violators by journals and tighten the other policies through which authors easily violating simultaneous submission policy.

Keywords: Simultaneous Submission; Publication Ethics; Author Misconduct

1 Introduction

Journals ensure the integrity of published work through peer-reviewing process [1] however, many ethical practices from both author as well as journal end require to be followed to ensure the integrity of best publishing practice. In an editorial Luiz Antonio Costa Tarcitano [2] discussed the legitimacy from both author as well as publisher perspective. Simultaneous submission also been termed as multiple submissions or dual submission is a practice of submitting the same manuscript to another journal while its already submitted and under consideration by a journal. Author may think that the submitting the manuscript simultaneously to several

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journals eventually multiplying their chances of successful publication however, the same strategy brings multiple associated problems for journals and authors both [2]. Such strategy of simultaneous submission is a fraudulent act which undermines the integrity of the publication process [3], [4] and it is being considered as a serious author misconduct.

Authors have an obligation to make sure their paper is based on original, unpublished, and not before consideration by another journal. Submitting a work simultaneously to more than one journal is considered a breach of publishing ethics (of course a serious author misconduct). Some of such misconducts are being caught and well known however some misconducts are undetectable. This article addresses some of the unseen issues surrounding simultaneous submission. How does it happen and remains undetected? Why is it a serious problem? And most importantly, what are the solutions from both author and journal's perspective?

2 Simultaneous Submission

Simultaneous submission occurs when the author submits a paper to two or more journals at the same time, which can result in more than one journal reviewing that particular paper. For example, the author submits a paper to Journal A and later on (maybe same day or after months) the author submits the same paper to other journals while still under consideration by the first submitted journal A. Simultaneous submissions are not only waste important editorial resources but also time which affects scientific integrity as seen in pandemic urgency of quick dissemination where editorial team did not have enough time for rigorous reviewing [5].

3 Is it Really Dishonest?

Yes, Submission to other journals are not allowed as long as the manuscript is under consideration by another journal. Some researchers argue that the simultaneous submission is not dishonest and it's a way to speed up paper publication process, however, the journals consider it as highly unethical author's behavior as it leads to a waste of editorial resources from two (or more) journals who spend time and money on carrying out the same editorial tasks.

4 The Consequences of Violating the Simultaneous Submission Policy

If the simultaneous submission gets discovered during peer-review process (which is rare) [6], all concerning journals may reject your paper, and some journals may list you under blocked author along with other warning of ethical action. If your paper ends up with simultaneous publication [7], all the journals concerned will retract it and some journals may block for future submission. Finally, if you were discovered to violate the submission policy, you may lose the journal's trust. As a result, the journal may examine your other submissions more closely to ensure no other ethical policy had been violated.

5 Most Serious Concern of Undetected Simultaneous Submissions

No doubt, if simultaneous submission gets detected either at reviewing process or later [6], [7], editor will take an appropriate action against the author. However, such detections happen only in few cases where either same reviewer received the paper from two different journals or highlighted due to published simultaneously in more than one journal and available publicly. But most serious case is when author keep wasting editorial resources of multiple journals for a single paper by simultaneous submission and never get detected [7], [8]. Such undetected cases contribute more than 99% of total simultaneous submission and they never get detected as they smartly withdraw papers (unethical withdrawal) from most of the simultaneously submitted or never

respond to the revision requested and ultimately the submission gets removed from the most of the journals. Due to such undetectable simultaneous submission most of the journals receive the same submissions and waste their resources for a paper which never meant for a possible publication, and hence translate to even longer review times for other legitimate submissions. Publishers shall come up with a collaborative approach to minimize this misconduct and hence save their precious resources as well as maximize the publication speed by focusing on legitimate submissions only. This smart trick of authors can be detected by maintaining a watch list; for example, journal shall maintain a list of sudden withdrawn manuscript as well as non-responding authors. Journal can crosscheck (may be every 3 months) those submissions if its already published somewhere or not; if found published the submission history should be matched for a possible simultaneous submission. In case of simultaneous submission detected, appropriate action shall be taken as per predefined policy for unethical withdrawal & for non-responder authors. This is the only way to detect and curb simultaneous submission practices that will save precious editorial resources and ultimately speedup publishing process of legitimate submissions.

6 Other Problems with Simultaneous Submissions

Masoud Negahdary [9] discussed various possible reasons that why simultaneous submission happen and how serious is it. He pointed out most common reasons ranging from unawareness of ethical policy to awareness and intentionally simultaneous submission by authors for various reasons (unethical). Does not matter what was the reason, as a thumb rule it's a set policy by all journals to not make simultaneous submission. Submitting the exact same manuscript simultaneously isn't encounter problems for only authors with a journal but it can also raise flags for editors & journals (when end up with simultaneous publication). When the same article appears in different journals, it introduces a range of problems including misinformation, citation confusion, author's & reader's trust on publishing journals, copyright or first publishing right problem, commercial distribution rights, journal's own reputation, etc.

7 What Should Author Do?

- Do not submit the same manuscript to more than one journal at a time.
- Even if a journal takes long time to send decision on your submission, wait to hear back from the journal before approaching to another journal. Submit to other journal only when the first journal decides to not publish the paper.
- For some reason if you cannot wait for the decision from first journal, withdraw your paper first, then submit to other journal only after first journal confirm your withdrawal request.
- If it's important to publish the paper immediately (for any reason); author shall choose preprint approach [10]. Even though, posting to a preprint server is allowed by most of the journal however, author still need to check if the targeted journal allows preprints posting or not.

8 Role of the Supervisor and University Library

Supervisor's role in educating major publication ethics to their students are very crucial. I received some email after simultaneous submission detected, author's reply that they didn't go through our policy and hence they were not aware of it. It's clearly just an excuse as those authors (even didn't read full policy) could not submit without accepting the submission term checklist which clearly said that the submission should not be before another journal for consideration. Even though if authors didn't read our policy, this submission policy is

universal for all journals and as a thumb rule simultaneous submission is not allowed by any journal. Supervisors are expected to let their students (especially first-time author) know such major and universal ethics as well as encourage to read publication ethics before submission. But the problem is more serious when its supervisor who violates ethical policy, of course they are aware of ethics but intentionally violating it. The role & responsibility of university libraries becomes crucial at this point. Libraries shall make a set of ethical guidelines and circulate to the faculty member so that they can be reminded for ethical adherence as well as faculty can pass the information to their students. Providing trusted information for library professionals has become an increasingly important activity in university libraries around the world. Such information can be disseminated through posting and regularly updating guidelines to special section of student's guide for publication on the library portal. Library professional may also conduct annual workshop on guide for publication specially to update and remind the ethical values to faculty members.

9 Conclusion

To avoid dual publication and wastage of editorial resources, almost all journals have a guideline in place to discourage simultaneous submissions. Despite this policy, simultaneous submissions still happening. They often get caught by reviewers or editors who were assigned to the manuscript at both journals, or by plagiarism detection tool when get published simultaneously. When notified in time, editors will reject the manuscript and remind the authors of the policy against simultaneous submission, and even inform the authors' institutions, but sometimes these incidents can be more complicated. Simultaneous submissions take up journal time and resources that could have been used to work on other manuscripts. Many editors and reviewers from multiple journals waste their time & money in working on a single article which they all can never publish. The most serious issue of simultaneous submission is due to tricks used by authors and despite of the misconduct it never been detected. Such undetected simultaneous submissions waste enormous amount of editorial resources silently from many publishers. Authors must be careful to not attempt simultaneous submission as it considered as serious violations of publication ethics and reflect poorly on an author's honesty and scholarly abilities. In these simultaneous submissions authors also often ignore critical reviewer comments from journals they don't end up publishing with.

10 Declarations

10.1 Study Limitations

This article is limited to a brief overview of simultaneous submission and associated problems from both author's as well as journal's perspective. In subsequent version of the article I plan to explore these issues and its solution in depth. And later on, I will add my own experience at AIJR Publisher with some statistics and policy insight to curb such misconducts. I request editors and reviewers to provide input on this article through preprint discussion tool so that it can be improved and beneficial for both authors as well as publishers.

10.2 Competing Interests

The author is associated with AIJR Publisher as managing editor.

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