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## An Assessment of Marketisation of 'Review' Designed Through Literature

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### Abstract

This exploratory qualitative study based on multiple-case studies collects reviewers' comments using a 'vector manuscript' that carries 5 obvious mistakes for assessment. On the basis of the synthesized guidelines prescribed for the reviewers, these comments are measured and assessed. The assessment of the collected review comments of conferences, international journals, and that of the institutional level (N=126), suggests that the elements of negligence and marketisation have already infused in the academics of review. Those who were more oriented towards money were found to be 6.9 times more threatening in comparison to those who were not money-oriented. In this study, at the institutional level, those accepting gifts from the student before reviewing the paper are coded as asking for money.

**Keywords:** Marketisation of Review; Review Ethics; Research Integrity

### Introduction

Apart from writing dissertations, the post graduate students of the Institute of Education of a 'Midtown'<sup>1</sup> University are required to publish academic papers in peer-reviewed international journals that are listed in the Social Science Citation Index, and to participate in an international conference before being conferred upon an academic degree. This normative structure of science (Clark, 1983p93; Merton, 1973p267-78) is practiced in all higher education institutions and therefore has a value of academic universalism intertwined in it. The method of cultivation of talents and enrichment of skills for international students, unlike the students of the host country, is designed to confine to the SQ 3R method (Matsumoto, 2009, p514) which involves some kinds of surveys, questioning, reading, reciting, and reviewing of a set of materials under the guidance of dedicated instructors; batch by batch, and year by year. However, all the contributions of these academic activities undergo one common process of assessment, called an academic review. The way of assessment of these papers is not very open and deserves criticism.

According to the narratives collected from a few international students, the pressure on the host country students is not the same as that of the international students due to following reasons: they work more closely with professors, hence they are more informed about the requirements of the courses and the important questions of the examinations, they are given considerations for the late submissions, they submit the paper only for research methodology courses and graded for all the courses for offering them early degrees, they have more access to the real-world population for conducting research, and most of the time they are closely assisted by the domestic faculties or those specially hired from abroad to help them write dedicatedly an English language paper so that they could be launched to a good university abroad. The situation for the international students is quite different, post hoc ergo hoc, they are not evaluated on the same pages. However, there could be exceptions to these perceptions.

Commercialization, marketisation, and the brokers (Lynch, 2006; Brown & Carasso, 2013) of higher education

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<sup>1</sup> A hypothetical name of a university.

have been driving the academic researchers and institutions very hard to cash their identity and products with their selling points in the academic market (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009; Monasta, 1997). This has led to some unfortunate consequences for those scholars who are power deprived but academically robust within the ambit of the academic world where rules are defined by power, price, reputation, and pelf. The scholars too pressed by the academic needs to become easy prey in this academic market (Grant Harman, 2010; Molesworth et al., 2009). The brokers encourage cults in the academics (Clark, 1983), and their clans misuse the rules which might bring local, institutional, and universal consequences for the customers of the higher education (Jongbloed, 2003).

This small-scale qualitative covert study is an attempt to assess the drive of the marketization of review apparently prevalent in the academic market from the perspectives of international students (Bendixen & Jacobson, 2017). Accordingly, review as the assessment is purely an academic activity. It becomes quintessential to see in what respect this activity is compromised under the guise of marketisation<sup>2</sup> of higher education today because in all cases it costs time (Cohen et al., 2016; Roberts, 2016; Xia et al., 2015), in most of the cases it costs money (Beall, 2016; Xia, 2015), and in some of the cases, it also costs life.

This research was purposefully conducted after the credit requirements of my PhD, taking the Graduate school and my then supervisor in consideration, for ensuring the fact that the rigour and my authority for conducting this research should not be deemed presumptuous. My identity as a paid student gives the vantage point of a customer to this qualitative study.

### **Research Background and Research Questions**

This study stems from the international student experiences, where I got the opportunity to witness some evidences of the proliferation of marketisation of higher education during my academic sojourn. The idea dispensed to the postgraduate students in the class by one of the highly qualified international educators, though arguably questioned by another, included intentionally evading the question from the informed audience during academic presentation of the research work that the students (presenters) believe they do not have the answer for. This class was formally meant to teach the academic publication and presentation methods to the postgraduate students. There were instances where the teachers did not deliver their duties after accepting the manuscript for review of the student(s).

The magnitude of the proliferation of the negative ideas in highly competitive universities are exponentially higher than anywhere else. They are the most competitive recipients of the ideas and values disseminated, and subsequently the authorities of the very next day. Universities as higher education institutions are the pool of the universal ideas practiced through the elements of academic freedom, academic respect, academic integrity, and academic skepticism associated with them (Clark, 1983; Merton, 1973). For, this study attempts to address the following research question: How do the responses of the reviewers vary to the vector of review after knowing the fact that the vector has been used for collecting their review comments on purpose?

### **Literature Review**

Scholars agree that the structure of academic quality is built upon peer review. They agree with the fact that the higher education educators could find their class being assessed as confronting (Gosling, 2014; Healey, Ambler, Irhammar, Kilfoil, & Lyons, 2014; Kilfoil, 2014; Sachs & Parsell, 2014; Spencer, 2014) and disrespectful. Review of teaching, due to the anonymity and nature of the object of review involved, is different from an academic review of research work (Elizabeth, Fiona, & Tom, 2002; Hames, 2007; Sachs & Parsell, 2014; Spencer, 2014) in journals. Moreover, the review is associated with many kinds of academic genres, including research article, thesis work, research grant application, research proposals, book proposals, or academic writings of both occluded and

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of marketisation is an extension of Burton Clark's idea 'exchange' in contrary to authority of the state in his highly cited book "*The higher education system: Academic organization in cross-national perspective (p136)*" by Burton Clark (1983). University of California press.

public nature. This list is even longer (Elizabeth et al., 2002; Fiona & Kay, 2003; Hames, 2007; Paltridge, 2017b; Swales & Feak, 1996). According to Wager, Godlee, & Jefferson (2002p3-47) academic review, in terms of rigor and expertise, could be divided into three groups i.e., Professional review, Peer review, and Informal review. In terms of accountability, professionalism, and expertise involved in the delivery of services, the professional review stands highest in this hierarchy. Ideally, this is a top-down process where the expertise of the reviewer(s) formally exceeds that of the manuscript writing, and delivery of services, by and large, is longer than the other two. It involves professors, editors, editorial boards, and committees where experts with the highest caliber and skills would review the academic paper or recommend the paper for additional reviews based on the technicalities, and the context of the paper (Wiley, 2018).

The 'peer review', ideally, is defined as the pre-publication formal collaborative system whereby a piece of academic work is scrutinized by people who did not involve in its creation but are considered knowledgeable about the subject (Cohen et al., 2016; Drummond, 2003; Elizabeth et al., 2002; Ferguson, Marcus, & Oransky, 2014; Fiona & Kay, 2003; Hames, 2007; Paltridge, 2017a; Spencer, 2014; Robert & Suzanne, 2003; Wager et al., 2002). However, it also describes the professional appraisal processes used to assess the performance of an individual, team, department, etc. In terms of the seriousness of consequences, the most significant of all the peer-reviews is the 'post-publication peer review' where the authors do not have any scope to change the information they have dispensed in their pieces of academic writing (Sachs & Parsell, 2014; Wager et al., 2002). Both professional and peer reviews, as a process, are mostly blinded where the author(s) does not have the access to the identity of the reviewer(s).

The informal peer (my emphasis) review is related to seeking comments and feedbacks from the experts, peers, and potential readers informally. This is a case of the open review where the authors and reviewers know the identity of each other (Liu & Carless, 2006; Matsumoto, 2009; Wager et al., 2002, Angelo, 2004). However, authors like Wager, Godlee, & Jefferson (2002) believe that seeking feedback informally on academic writing from colleagues is helpful but without telling them the specific area of the paper, where and how they could decide to glean their thoughts in, is also literally asking for a trouble. In their terms:

"...This is asking for trouble. You will avoid much frustration if you select reviewers for specific skills and give them clear directions. In a work's early stages, you might ask someone to comment on the overall structure, whether the arguments flow logically, and whether you have omitted anything vital... (Wager et al., 2002, p43).

Nonetheless, not all open reviews are informal reviews because in some cases, the manuscripts could be over technical for the publications where the publishers might ask the authors to suggest some experts of their field who could make competent reviews for them. In such cases, the requisite of anonymity could be compromised (Comer & Schwartz, 2014; Fogg & Fiske, 1993; Leung, Law, Kucukusta, & Guillet, 2014). The premise of anonymity and blind review do not guarantee a bias-proof practice of reviewing and hence could not be strictly considered academic. There are scams (Ferguson et al., 2014) and misconducts (Drummond, 2003) reported regarding peer reviews. In addition to this, the eagerness to publish and gaining reputation in the academicians have made the defaulters more organized (Cohen et al., 2016) from both the authors' and the reviewers' parts. The predatory journals, and conferences as a consequence are mushrooming (Beall, 2016; Clark & Smith, 2015; Giglio & Luiz, 2017; Richtig, Berger, Lange-Asschenfeldt, Aberer, & Richtig, 2018; Roberts, 2016; Strielkowski, 2017; Xia, 2015; Xia et al., 2015). Furthermore, in the given network of the academic market any 'vegetarian' reviewer could turn out to be 'carnivorous' next moment, before they are categorized as predators. In this regard, the review as a process, though complex, needs to be assessed and reported transparently and candidly for even respecting the rules of the academic market because academics fundamentally reserves the right to serve the truth but not reputations (Clark, 1983).

### Conceptual Framework

The Beall's list of predatory journals has been withdrawn from the market ever since 2017 (Strielkowski, 2017), and the relevance of its data could not be guaranteed any more. Most of the journals and conferences throughout the world would adopt similar practices for the review (Elizabeth, Fiona, & Tom, 2002; Hames, 2007).

In this case the difference in review comments from the journals and conferences is mostly subjective in nature (Fiona & Kay, 2003). If the subjectivity of the decisions is deemed limited to some obvious errors in the manuscript, then the likelihood of irresponsibility of the reviewers pertaining to prescribed rules of reviews could be easily measured. Besides, due to the influence of actors and factors of marketisation, and the brokers of academic reputation the collection of academic review data from the public domain directly would not serve the purpose of this research. In the light of these two reasons first hand data was considered comparatively appropriate. The vector manuscript was designed for this purpose. Moreover, due to the nature, status, and reputation of the respondents of this study the covert method was considered more appropriate for collecting the data.

The dictionary meaning of the vector is a physical quantity that has both direction and magnitude. It's a vessel that carries pathogen and transmits it to the host. It's the position of an air-craft represented in terms of coordinated values. The original meaning of vector, however, is a carrier (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). The comprehensive meaning of vector could be best described through a Chinese story 'Chao Chuan Jie Jian' where a strategist, called Kong Ming, mindfully tricks his enemy soldiers to collect all the arrows from them<sup>3</sup> (Guizhong, 1979). In this study, the vector (the boat) is a manuscript<sup>4</sup> which collects the feedbacks (arrows) on the basis of the 12 (5 major and 7 minor) errors as requisites from the reviewers. This is done in close proximity of the stipulated guidelines for them (Australian Government, 2017; COPE, 2013; CSE, 2012; ELSEVIER, 2015; ESRC, 2010; ICMJE, n.d.; Taylor & Francis, 2017; Wiley, 2017). Due to the limited time, sensitivity, and nature of the respondents this research has been conducted only to understand the phenomenon of sincerity towards review practices among the reviewers in a covert way. The major mistakes were related to data, design, and dates in the paper. Other small mistakes included missing citations from reference section, inconsistency in the reported tables of correlation and also official involvement of other researchers.

The boat fits the vector analogy, theoretically, as well. In theory, measurement, as stated by Stevens (1946) is 'the assignment of numerals to objects or events according to rules' (Aftanas, 1988; Stevens, 1946). The different sections with obvious mistakes in the 'vector manuscript' strictly fulfill the number of boats in the story stated above.

## Data and Design

The data for analysis comes from the observations, email responses, and instant messenger WeChat responses of the reviewers from 09<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 to 09<sup>th</sup> of May 2019. All the respondents in this study were highly professional academic reviewers whose professional accountability could not be controlled, and giving 'informed consent' would have distorted the natural-settings of the research. All reviews on vector manuscript come from the conferences, and journals related to the subject of vector manuscript i.e., education. Furthermore, it would be quite intimidating to ask them to perform the reviews for the sake of this study. Altogether 126 review responses for the vector were collected (conference=43, Institution=38, Journal=45). These review responses were coded according to the variables displayed in the Table1 below.

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<sup>3</sup> Strategist Kunming was ordered by the General Zhou Yu to collect 100,000 arrows from the enemies or else face the execution. Kunming, a man of unsurpassable intelligence and virtue, accepts the challenge to bring the arrows within three days. With 20 boats having straw-soldiers made on both sides of the boat, with torch, and a few chieftain Kunming boats during the late night in the river where on the other side a large troop of soldiers from the enemy king Caocao is waiting to wage a war. Kunming's boat closes to the bank of the enemy side and they start shooting arrows on the boats. The arrows get struck in the straws and Kunming returns with the arrows to Zhou Yu. Zhou Yu asks why he was so confident about this act of Caocao. Kunming answers he knew that it's going to be foggy those days and the king Caocao was a little over-confident (Luo Guizhong, 1979).

<sup>4</sup> The title of the manuscript: 'Impact of 'one minute' paper on the final score: Assessment of two courses.'

Table 1. Tree structure of the data in terms of variables

PRCM	N	SRC	N	DNSRC	N	Type	N	k		
No Data	1	No Data	1	Does Not S~c	1	Institution	1	0		
Yes Prompted	51	No Data	9	Does Not S~c	4	Institution	1	0		
				Journal	3	2				
				Does Not S~e	5	Conference	2	2		
						Institution	1	0		
						Journal	2	2		
		Sends Revi~s	33	No Data	33	Conference	9	6		
						Institution	5	0		
						Journal	19	17		
		Sends Revi~e	9	No Data	9	Conference	3	2		
						Institution	4	1		
				Journal	2	2				
Not Prompted	74	No Data	20	No Data	1	Conference	1	0		
				Does Not S~c	15	Conference	9	4		
				Institution	3	0				
						Journal	3	1		
						Does Not S~e	4	Conference	1	0
						Institution	3	0		
		Sends Revi~s	35	No Data	35	Conference	12	9		
						Institution	9	0		
						Journal	14	8		
		Sends Revi~e	19	No Data	18	Conference	5	4		
				Institution	11	1				
				Journal	2	2				
				Does Not S~e	1	Conference	1	1		
total							126	64		

Note: PRCM: Prompted with comments for sending review; SRC: Sends review comments (Accepts or Declines or No Data); DNSRC: Do not send review comments (Accepts or Declines or No Data); TYPE: Institution (University Institutions), Journals, and Conferences; N: Number of observations at each level; K= number of times alternative is chosen.

Table 2. Source of guidelines for reviewers

List Source	THEMES
1 American Metrological Society (2010)	Transparency, Timliness, Rigor, Respect for person, Predatory journals, Parameter of review, Integrity, Impartiality, Constructive critique, Conflict of interest, Confidentiality, Competence
2 Australian Government (2017)	
3 Committee on Publication Ethics (2013)	
4 Council of Science Editors (2012)	
5 Elsevier (2015)	
6 International Committee of Medical Journal Editors	
7 Taylor & Francis (2017)	
8 Wiley (2017)	
9 American Psychological Assocation (2011)	
10 ASME (1999)	
11 Cambridge University (2019)	
12 Environment Protection Agency (2015)	
13 Provenzale & Stanley (2005)	
14 Rockwell (2005)	

After situating the context, the nature of respondents, and the data; the multiple case-study design was found to be the most suitable methods of all for this study. The multiple case-study design is suitable for searching

the phenomenon and trends in the real world where the researchers have little or no control (Lorna & Connie, 2013; Yin, 1984) upon. The concept of multiplicity in the study strengthens the external validity of the research. The study is not designed to measure the cognitive capacity, expertise level, and reputation of the respondents but their adherence to the reviewer's ethical guidelines on the basis of what they would respond in their review comments. The pre-informed consent was not submitted to the reviewers but a post-study debriefing was distributed after the culmination of the data collection. Moreover, since the review process involves credible amount of time and money for the manuscript writers; it therefore, was expected from them to deliver it dutifully. This study, like other multiple case-study designs, based on the themes that has emerged after coding the guidelines for reviewers from the various authentic sources, (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) analyze the data based on constant comparisons.

The unit of analysis for this study was the reviewer's comments on each section grounded on the themes so induced from the literature review of the guidelines. Altogether 115 themes were coded from 16 different sources of ethical guidelines for the reviewers. The source file of COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) 2013 and 2017 were merged together; and the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) guidelines were only used for consultation purpose. Practically, there appears only 14 guideline sources in the data set. In total, 12 themes emerged from these guidelines in which the review for rigor in research was the most counted in terms of both reference-themes and number of words in the guideline materials. The data so collected from emails WeChat were put together on a word file, and coded based on these themes to measure the alteration with reference to the prescribed reviewers' comments.

### **Definition of Emergent Themes**

According to the listed source of definitions in Table 2, Competence referred to accepting a manuscript when the reviewer, journals, conference have the expertise in the subject of the manuscript. The auto-coded sub-categories on the basis of reference-codes emerged as subject expertise, relevant expertise, and adequate expertise. Confidentiality referred to respecting the intellectual independence, not disclosing the details of the manuscript and review comments to anyone unless approved by the editor. The auto-coded sub-categories of confidentiality suggested to keep the content, and identity confidential both during and after the review process. Conflict of interest referred to vested ideological, or material interest, directing if the reviewer has already reviewed the paper 3 months before or belongs to the same institution to which the author or investor in the manuscript belong to. In this case, s/he should decline the manuscript from reviewing. In short, in such cases the editor should be informed if there are potential interest of kind or means vested in the manuscript for the reviewers.

Constructive critic refers to giving both positive and negative critics, irrespective of ideological and personal inclination of the manuscript writer(s). Impartiality, rather appeared as a complex concept with many sub-themes but it was related to making decisions without any personal, professional, intellectual, commercial biases to the nature of the manuscript. Integrity contained the sub-themes of ethics in research where reviewers also supposed to not use the research findings for the interest of their organization, and searching for the fatal-flaws in the manuscript.

Parameter of Review were the specific requirements from the publishers to follow while conducting a review for them. Predatory Journals or Pseudo-Journals referred to those journals or conferences that are mushrooming to make money and deliver very little for the academic quality and progress, and are having no record in the standard academic market. Respect for Person referred to respecting the authors and not using derogatory remarks on anyone involved in the study while conducting the review. Rigor referred to making all possible kind of judgement on the manuscript in terms of its (but not limited to) structure, design, data, methodology, analysis, and conclusions. Timeliness was related to delivering review services on time, or else not accepting the manuscript rather suggesting some names for the review. Transparency referred to if the reviewers in all circumstances conduct review under their own identity and never in the guise of anyone else, or even anonymously.



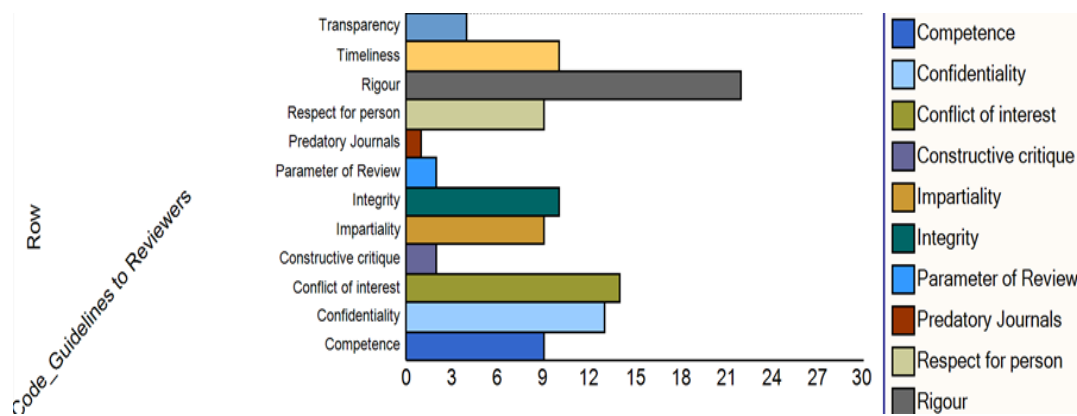


Figure 1. Reference coded count. Synthesized based on ethical guidelines literature

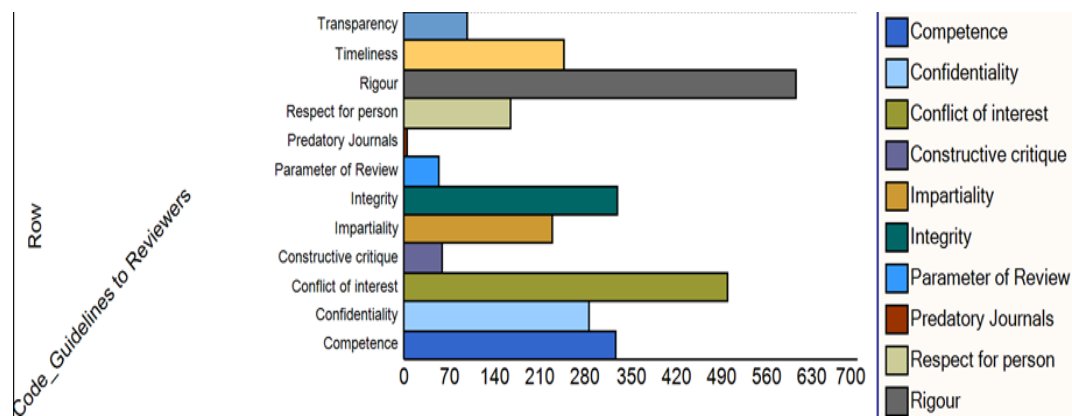


Figure 2. Words coded count. Synthesized based on ethical guidelines literature

However, a comparison of themes by coding similarity indicates that some of the themes emerged to be very similar. It would not bring much different result if they are merged into thematic super-codes. Moreover, codes of similar themes would make the coding process very ambiguous that ultimately would lead to not clear results. Keeping these points in mind the themes of Conflict of Interest, and Confidentiality were merged with Integrity; themes of Competence were merged with Rigor; themes of Parameters were merged with Transparency; and themes of Constructive Critics were merged with Impartiality (See Figure 3).

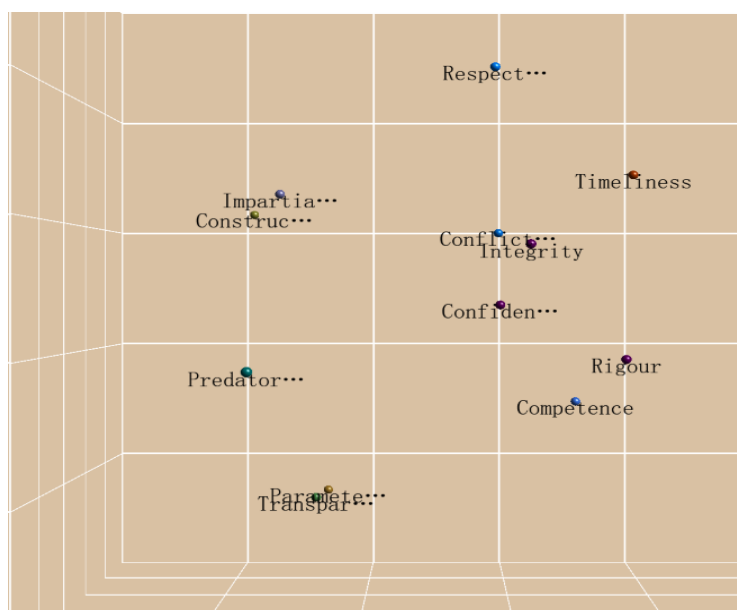


Figure 3. Comparison of themes by coding similarity

## Why Covert Design

Ever since Nazi atrocities on human beings, covert studies have been considered illegal and un-ethical if they ever include human subjects. However, in social world research where the existence of phenomenon and trend has to be investigated, the studies without informed consents, with some conditions, are permissible (BERA, 2018,p7; BPS, 2000, 2014, p24; BSA, 2002, p4; Deaton & Cartwright, 2018; Sally, Ron, & Ursula, 2004, p61; SRA, 2003, p34). For example, the social research association with some restrictions stipulate that:

"...covert observation and any other forms of research which use deception (my emphasis: this study does not involve deception) can only be justified where there is no other ethically sound way of collecting accurate and appropriate data. If research requires any kind of deception, then only by the clear demonstration of the benefits of the research can it be justified..." (SRA, 2003, p33-34).

The Psychological Society, however, find deception and covert study legitimate to those situations only where it is quite essential for maintaining the truth in the research result:

"...covert collection of data should only take place where it is essential to achieve the research results required...(my emphasis)...where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy." (BPS, 2014, p24).

In most of the cases Randomized control trial designs are even associated with some sort of covertness (Corbetta, 2003, p115). There are regulations for informed consent for children participants, and participants with intellectual and cognitive disabilities too. In these cases, informed consents from the gate-keepers are eminent. However, in this study no such human subject interventions are involved. In order to respect the privacy of the subjects their responses have been analyzed with anonymity. The research environment was kept in a purely natural settings and no monetary reimbursements, benefits, or gifting were practiced during the data collection of this study. However, all the participants were shown respect without partiality<sup>5</sup>.

## Data Analysis

For answering the Research Question of this study, the data analysis section emphasizes two key findings in terms of data whether there are reviewers who are more interested in earning money than sending review comments; and how do they respond while knowing the fact that the vector manuscript was a litmus test for their review practice. Some of them were found to be little threatening even after knowing their mistake, some remain silent, and there were some who sounded apologetic for their negligence. This section would analyse the reviewers' comments (qualitative data) after interpreting them into the concepts of Integrity, Rigor, Transparency, Impartiality, Respect, Timeliness, and Predatory.

The vector manuscript contained 5 major and 7 minor errors collected from 64 review comments out of the entire set of 126 reviewer comments. However, very few authors were able to pinpoint those 5 mistakes. Multiple case study for the convenient of reporting the results have been divided into three categories i.e., the Institutions, Conferences, and the Journals where for each category the data collection runs for 27 weeks. There are journal articles where the reviewers have declined to make reviews on the manuscript. Nonetheless, in most of the cases reviewers from the journals have not sent reviews only when they must reject the paper. There are few cases at Institutional level when the reviewers have not sent reviewers' comments even after accepting the manuscript for reviewing. The reviewers of the conferences have mostly accepted to review, sent reviews, and accepted to publish (Presentation) the manuscript in the conference. The over view of the data from the reviewers explain their attitude for their profession which costs both time and money for the young scholars at the higher education institutions. It becomes necessary to see some of the quintessential responses in the milieu of those coded themes of guidelines for analysis.

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<sup>5</sup> At institutional level some accepted gift before responding to the review.



## 1. Cases from Institutions

Duration: 27 Weeks Means of data collection: Email, We-Chat, Observation

There were altogether 38 different responses at the institutional level. Among these 9 reviewers' responses were availed from WeChat, other responses were collected through emails. Observation of the reviewers on the manuscript during the presentation in the class were also noted in case of some extreme or exceptional comments. However, the comments in the cases from Institutions mainly dwindled around the parameters and the rigour. The review comments lacked professional reporting style and did not appear very specific to the fatal errors. One of the reviewers after a request sends post-presentation review on the 'vector manuscript' as follows:

"Dear XXXXXX: Sorry for not getting to your email in time—I can't always promise <24-hour turnaround. I am pleased it was helpful to you to bring forward the presentation and produce in solo format. In any event, I think best to keep low key in the interests for you and other class participants. Remember in a presentation that to communicate best it is important to present just a few ideas in the simplest form possible. Parsimony is best. Also please stick to time. I got a little lost in your talk with lots of very detailed results stemming from multidimensional thinking, and as colleagues asked it is unclear to me the context or source of the evidence hence generalisability and relevance, etc. You have a very imaginative and thoughtful approach to studying education research matters. Remember even (especially!) if the study/analysis is very complex or difficult, it is always best to communicate in the most compelling and direct way. In terms of 1-minute paper, I learned from your presentation, so thank you for that. Take care. 7/10"

There were two instances where the reviewers accepted to review but did not send comments on time. Some of the characteristics of the review in this space (Institutions) involved disrespecting the integrity, and timeliness. However, after multiple prompts sent to the reviewers 'vector manuscript' returned to its destiny when one of the reviewers did not send reviewers comments on the fatal errors of the manuscript but informed to the committee to reject the paper. Nonetheless, at this stage also the idea of timeliness, and integrity were not respected. After knowing that the 'manuscript' is a vector for collecting data, instead of accepting negligence, the threats were also sent on the grounds of prestige issue, from some of the reviewers, particularly those who accepted the gifts.

## 2. Cases from Journals

Duration: 27 Weeks Means of data collection: Email

All the journals selected for collecting reviewers' comments are those International journals which are delivering their services in English language and are somehow related to higher education institutions. Altogether, 45 reviewers from the international journals responded to the vector manuscript, including one that declined to accept the vector manuscript even for reviewing. Among these only 37 reviewers involved in deep email discussions and 2 out of 8 who did not send the review comments, rejected the paper. The two journals, which were somewhat related to very reputed institutions, accepted the paper to publish without giving any comments on the manuscript, albeit asking for publication charges 100 British pounds, and 400 USD respectively. One of the typical reviews reads:

"We are happy to inform you that your article is going to be published in XXXX Studies (Vol 13). Before your article goes into press, please take some time to review the proofs and this is the last chance that you may make any correction on the article. Please fill in the enclosed 'Permission to Publish form' and 'Error report form' and return them via email to notifications@xxxxx.co.xx before 8pm GMT July 4. We look forward to receiving your response."

One of the journals that accepted to publish the paper after giving the reviewer comments was somewhat very professional in writing its review report. It first talks about the strength of the paper and then it talks about the weakness of the paper, but it also does not point out the fatal mistakes in the vector manuscript.

"This is a really interesting exploration and reporting on the usefulness and accuracy of the one-minute paper on a student's final score. I think this paper is far too statistical and scientific for the journal. It is really difficult to follow, comprehend and understand after page 5. It would be great if the authors could write in plain academic English what the tables are saying as it would be quite interesting. However, from my perspective, the way in which the data is presented is inaccessible to many of the journal's audience."

Most interestingly, when journals were informed about the experimental nature of the vector and telling them the manuscript was borne with 5 fatal errors, they either chose to not respond to this, send some apologetic comments, or even send encouraging words. However, unlike the sentiments of threat from institutions and conferences, none of the journals had sent any threatening comments after understanding the nature of the manuscript. Some of the typical examples in this regard are:

"Dear XXXXXX XXX XXXXXXXXXXX, Thank you for your email. To check my understanding – you wish now to withdraw your manuscript from consideration? As it stands this paper has not yet been sent for review as it is still with the lead editor for an initial assessment. The initial email you received was to confirm the paper had been received by the journal and may be considered to send forward for peer review but it had not yet been seen by any reviewers. We would no longer hold this manuscript for further consideration. Sorry for the delay. Best wishes..."

Not all the review comments sent by journals were technically right. Some reviewers even showed lack methodological understanding and making comments without checking the facts regarding the methods of analysis. The incorrect information on statistically analysed sections but articulated in extremely refined language also appeared in some reviews. However, one of the well reputed journals, which has been listed in International Social Science Index has sent very encouraging comments after understanding the real nature of the manuscript.

"Thank you. Hopefully we doing up to your expectation. I wish you the best with your endeavours. ... Kind regards..."

The reviewer's comments of the journals appeared to be relatively more professional and ethical on the coded themes of Integrity, Transparency, Impartiality, and Respect. However, they also lacked rigor in their review comments as their comments also mainly were related to the structure of the manuscript but not about the specific problems in the vector. Moreover, the two journals though related to institutions of high-class repute did come out to be predatory in nature. Nonetheless, all of the reviewers remained considerate for the kind of study conducted on them.

### 3.Cases from Conferences

Duration: 27 Weeks. Means of data collection: Email

Among 43 reviewers from the conferences, 13 did not send any review comments and 4 out of these 13 rejected the manuscript. The reviewers' comments on the vector manuscript from Conferences have been swinging to the extremes of predatory to benevolent (negatively predatory) in this study. Among the 43 conference reviewers, only 30 involved in deep discussions, including the post-hoc vector-nature revelations of the manuscript. Among the post-hoc vector-nature responses 16 reviewers sent apologetics remarks, whereas 9 sent threatening comments. One case in which the reviewer though asks for modification but rejects the paper has been the most professional example of the review. In this study, the reviewer recommends for writing the paper in short and briefing the entire research in 2000 words. However, as informed by the editor the editorial committee rejected the paper on the ground that the paper is too technical for the audience they serve. This was the only situation when the reviewers asked for revisiting the paper especially the dates of the vector, and cordially reject the paper for publication.

"Dear XXXXXX, please rewrite your manuscript not exceeding 2000 words including **references**. Check the dates,

and data, and choose only two tables to describe your findings. Put the tables and figures together in one page and send us as soon as possible.”

This section in terms of collecting responses was a rich section because here the reviewers were asked to write the importance and significance of their conferences too. This section was studied in more detailed way also because in terms of money, time and life the conference cost is relatively high owing to registration and conference fees, and the visiting of participants individually to the conference sites. However, one of the conference reviewers who also sent the review on the vector manuscript was quite unhappy about the experiment:

“As a highly respected organisation The XXXXX Studies Association draws its membership from over 50 UK and international Universities and must look after the integrity of its membership. Therefore, in the next 48 hours you must reply to advise me that: 1. All data relating to XXXX in your deceptive project has been removed. 2. Forward the Title of your research project and supervisor. 3. Forward the Ethical Approval Documentation from “Midtown” University Ethics Review Board which specifically related to the deceptive project which you say below XXXX has been part of. If this is not forthcoming, I may have to contact the Head of Ethics at “Midtown” University. As you have already upset one of our reviewers who tried to help you. I would argue that you have already breached the prime ethical directive to do no harm with your research. Our conference has had wonderful feedback and participants came from Canada, Hong Kong, Australia and the Middle East; and I will protect the reputation of XXXX at all costs. I look forward to your reply herewith.”

As a researcher the most fundamental principle is searching the truth but it is equally based on respecting the respondents of the research. The reviewer, therefore, was replied in the following manner:

“Dear XYZ Sir, you are right. This was an experiment in a capacity of a customer. Informed consents are academic terminology and informed judgement is a universal one. But I have to attend a BSA/BERA level of international conferences in future. Some names are confusing and therefore it was a sort of experiment to filter out the better conferences, not a research. I, therefore have sent you the email that was meant for the withdraw of manuscript from your conference. You have the right to contact to anyone you want, Ethical committee of Govt of the US, India, and China too! I am not rich so cannot pay just like that! Good Night! May God Bless You!”

This reply culminates a very strong discussion with an apologetic response from the reviewer and later revealing all the chains of discussion from their organisation ensuring the manuscript has been destroyed: “Hi XX XXXXX, we shall leave it there then -attached is the file of discussion with us. Good luck with your future studies. Dr.XXXX, PhD(Liv.) SFHEA, MSc. C.I.A./F (ACCA), PGCE, BA. Senior Lecturer.”

While conducting this study, I also encountered very modest reviewers in the market who do not bother about the nature of study but always provide professional comments and remain very respectful in their responses. One of the representative responses is as follows:

“I’m not sure all that this means, XXXXXX. I hope it’s not a disappointment for you involving your PhD. With all of your efforts that I see on the internet, I’ll bet you’ll be at our Institute another year. Best wishes to you...”

While conducting this study, I received two bursaries for attending conferences but in order to serve the purpose of the research the revelations of the experiment was necessary before the end of the Spring Semester (2019). The discussions with highly professional people in this field helped me understand the possible glitches in academic review market. The findings of this study to some extent would invoke the responsibilities among the academic reviewers and beckon them towards the guidelines prescribed for academic reviews sincerely. For avoiding the research bias in this study, qualitative data were transformed into quantitative ones for the analysis, and synthesizing them as the thesis. The statistical analysis section entails this.

### Statistical Analysis

In spite of the fact that the results of this study could not be generalised the statistical analysis of this study shows very typical trend among the reviewers of the academic market. All the data collected from the reviewers were coded, and hence turned categorical in nature. Kruskal -Wallis test is used to compare unpair groups in which the null hypothesis assumes that the distribution of three groups will be identical (Agresti, 2019) pertaining to the characteristics (SRC, DNSRC, and PRCM) of the comments. The results of the frequency distribution of SRC for both the cases (Sends review or not) for AFM (Asks for money) and AFE (Response of the reviewers after knowing that was experiment) were found to be identical i.e., (p-value = 0.4216 for AFM and p-value=0.5124 for AKE).

According to the Bonferroni's method of comparison it was found that there are evidences of difference pertaining to the attitude of the reviewers after knowing the experimental nature of the vector manuscript of this research (Agresti, 2019; Prasad, 2015). Furthermore, the comparison of the odd ratios of the variables AKE, and AFM pertaining to the variables Type and SRC indicate that there are significant differences in the Odd Ratios of each stratum of the variables with reference to the variable SRC, and the variable Type (Prasad, 2015). The point estimate in the model below indicates that asking for money and the response of the reviewers after knowing the characteristics of vector manuscript among these variables are statistically significant. Particularly in reference to the those who have sent the comments on the vector manuscript were 6.9 (95% CI:1.56, 30.40) times more likely to send threatening comments if they had asked for money in comparison to those who did not (Prasad, 2015, p89).

Table3. Description of the variables

Variable	Meaning	Values
<i>SRC</i>	<i>Send review comments</i>	<i>Yes=1, No=0, No Data=.</i>
<i>DNSRC</i>	<i>Do not send review comment</i>	<i>Yes=1, No=0, No Data=.</i>
<i>PRCM</i>	<i>Prompted with comments to send review</i>	<i>Yes=1, No=0, No Data=.</i>
<i>AFM</i>	<i>Asks for money before or without reviewing</i>	<i>Yes=1, No=0, No Data=.</i>
<i>AKE</i>	<i>After knowing this is experiment</i>	<i>Yes=1, No=0, No Data=.</i>

Table 4. Odd Ratios of AKE & AFM pertaining to SRC respectively

SRC	OR	[95% Conf. Interval]	M-H Weight
No Data	<b>4.15664</b>	<b>3.325444</b> <b>5.19624</b>	<b>39.86193</b> (exact)
Sends Review Com	<b>3.879479</b>	<b>3.27628</b> <b>4.594308</b>	<b>69.73548</b> (exact)
Sends Review Com	<b>2.555605</b>	<b>2.060645</b> <b>3.170347</b>	<b>54.4468</b> (exact)
Crude	<b>3.497723</b>	<b>3.141583</b> <b>3.894334</b>	(exact)
M-H combined	<b>3.50743</b>	<b>3.137932</b> <b>3.920436</b>	

Test of homogeneity (M-H)             $\chi^2(2) = 12.52$      $Pr > \chi^2 = 0.0019$

Test that combined OR = 1:

Mantel-Haenszel  $\chi^2(1) = 519.00$   
 $Pr > \chi^2 = 0.0000$





The methodological rigour founded on truthfulness is the core of the quality of the research. The agencies of reviews must be more cautious and the researchers as the agents of research should be open to the criticism.

Universities stands for the ideals of universal truth. It is ethically strong enough to investigate any phenomenon of any sensitivity without compromising the ethics and values on which the academe is founded upon. It is in this space where the presentation of research would find most informed audience. Dispensing ideals of escapism during presentations by the scholars i.e., 'you should trickily escape the question that you do not know or tell the audience would answer you later'; would bluntly nip the creativity, ideals of inquisitiveness, quest for worth, and respect for truth among the budding scholars. It must be stopped immediately at the higher education level, considering the scale of proliferations of this degenerated idea. Asking specific questions based on expertise would certainly save the time and improve the mutual expertise of the scholars during the presentations of research manuscripts. An open portal of reviewers, stratified based on research expertise, in the academics could solve this purpose.

In the hours of turmoil at the higher education institutions where authorities encourage their students to indulge in violent activities, this research would spark their creative thinking to research their problem academically. This would make their mere complaint more precise, organized, systematically methodological, and to the point so that it could be addressed and hence solved correctly. The concept of reviewer in this research is the unit from where the review comments are received that includes the contact person of the case categories.

Lastly, while conducting this study, I witnessed two learning points. First, the students must respect their teachers and in turn all students must be respected by their educators. Second, students should be allowed to inform their mind to the fullest to their humble teachers. This is the only way how the reality could be shaped for betterment, rightful decisions could be made, and the skills of virtue and excellence could be cultivated. Academic institutions must cherish their academic values of freedom and truthfulness.

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