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Conflict of Interests Regarding Peer Review: Bias in Manuscript Rejection

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The majority of submitted manuscripts, across all article-journal types, may be rejected for one or more reasons... While the reasons for rejection vary between desk, post-peer-review, and post-editorial-review rejections, many of the issues raised could be easily avoided by devoting enough time to planning and conceptualizing the work under consideration. Indeed, Aristotle (384–322 BC) in the Rhetoric (the art of persuasion), which was a theory of - civic discourse - stated: "The mistake lies in the beginning; as the proverb says, 'Well begun is half done;' so an error at the beginning, though quite small, bears the same ratio to the errors in the other parts." This quote seems especially appropriate in this case. This paper examines the various reasons for which an article may not be accepted or considered for publication and then the paper moves into providing an explanation of the different reasons by which an article may not be considered for publication based on the reviewer's belief, faith, professional discrepancies or methodological outcomes. Well organised and sufficient preparation is the key to success. The authors hope that people across academia and other professional experts can use this discussion when leading training-building research workshops to create awareness and assist researchers in planning and writing research papers that have better probabilities of acceptance, yet are easy to assimilate for the average reader and truly advance knowledge.

Keywords*: bias, manuscript, prejudice, rejection, review*

Introduction

The nature in which the study approach has been sustained aims to reduce the rejection load caused by unconscious bias, blind peer review manifests the process in which scientific works or technological projects are evaluated by academic experts in the same or similar professional field before the publication. In understanding the definitions, steps and dynamics, it is considered that these actions guarantee the promotion of high-quality academic research and that the findings materialized in the results are reliable. The reliability and validity of the discoveries strengthen the principles that help maintain a quality standard in the development of academic and scientific-technological knowledge (Nerina Fernanda 2016). Academics may all like to believe that they are objective scholars who may evaluate individuals or written works solely on the basis of their credentials or content. However, numerous studies reveal that each of us has a unique life experience and a particular cultural background that has shaped our

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inner beliefs, thoughts, taste, and behaviour over the course of our entire lives, which in turn has influenced or predisposed how reviews are conducted. Cultural differences in human behaviour have been widely recorded and analysed by numerous psychological theories that emphasize cognitive or affective factors (Han 2015, p. 68). This highlights how frequently people are astonished by how others behave unexpectedly when traveling between cultures. Humans frequently have unconscious or implicit presuppositions that affect how a judgment is passed and presented. Given that both men and women hold firmly solid ideas about gender, the evaluator's gender is irrelevant when examining these credentials (Eve and Jo 2012) cognitive biases often work through reasons. Instead of merely opting for the conclusion one prefers, human beings curiously come up with reasons, even if dubious ones, in order to justify their decisions to others and, importantly, to themselves. Applying frequent generalization to a population or written work may or may not be appropriate for the evaluation process, an erroneous impartial appraisal may result from this generalization. This raised issue may bring a few questions for discussion, such as: What transpires when doing an impartial assessment of a written article which is challenging to measure? Or in cases when generalization leads to incorrect assessment? How can we encourage objectivity and avoid presumption in peer-reviewed articles to lower the rejection of low-quality assessments? Although this is not a paper on cultural neuroscience approach, it remains a challenge to provide a coherent understanding of cultural discrepancies and behaviour. Culture and view point, 'Thoughts'… perspective taking may be another universal factor to be considered useful to interpret other people's actions which investigate the effect of culture, for example: East Asian cultures are often characterized as collectivistic, as opposed to Western culture, which is often characterized as individualistic (Wu and Keysar 2007, p. 600). Nisbett and Masuda (2003) pointed out that; '*East Asians and Westerners perceive the world and think about it in very different ways. Westerners are prone to focusing on a single object, analysing and categorizing its attributes in an effort to find out what rules govern its behaviour (11163).*' The physical ''affordances'' of the environment may also influence and have an impact on perception. It may be argued as well that the followers of a particular scientific method identify themselves with the central ideas of that system, developing a loyalty to it or to its originator drawing them into an unconscious bias (Iltis 1973, p. 345). Likewise, academic discourse expresses the language and style used in writing, which is usually formal and objective, guided by the position of a specialized and technical language to communicate ideas and findings. This usually follows a specific structure of academic discourse to support methodological statements and contribute to the development of the scientific field, the cultural and geographical context, to cite paradigmatic examples that academic institutions explore. For this reason, the agency of the findings in the academic discourse is organized in a clear and logical way with a coherent structure that facilitates the understanding and monitoring of the argument (Bolívar 2020). This clarity of written language, concisely expressed in its formal and objective style, prevents reductionist generalizations and erroneous assumptions generated by discrepancies in peer-

reviewed articles from conclusions based on empirical evidence due to cognitive biases.

From the brief review presented above, key points are revealed which are essential to this two-section paper. First, this paper offers the terminology of the following keywords such as, 'bias'; 'rejection', 'withdrawn,' and some other similar words presented in the introduction title; and second, this paper establishes some fundamental questions to lead this discourse, why manuscripts are rejected; or does a blind peer-review offer a healthier proof-reading solution to minimize the number of paper rejections?

American Psychologist Gordon Allport (1954) in his book: *'The Nature of Prejudice'* published by Addison-Wesley remains a benchmark for psychological research on prejudice. This study of implicit social cognition has two different and more modern sets of origins (Brownstein 2019). The first originates from the distinction drawn by cognitive psychologists in the 1970s between 'controlled' and 'automatic' information processing. While "controlled processing" was supposed to be voluntary attention-demanding and of limited capacity; "automatic processing" was thought to unfold without attention and have practically infinite capacity and is difficult to suppress deliberately (Payne and Gawronski 2010). The ability to judge people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour without directly asking them is arguably the most important achievement in research on implicit social cognition. Implicit measures might thus be considered as tools that assess people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour indirectly, that is, without relying on 'self-report'. In the social cognition literature, the term 'implicit' refers to at least four distinct things (Gawronski and Brannon 2017), explain below:

1. a distinctive psychological construct which is assessed by a variety of instruments;
2. a family of instruments, that assess people's thoughts and feelings in a specific way;
3. a set of cognitive and affective processes that affect responses on a variety of measures; and,
4. a kind of evaluative behaviour elicited by specific circumstances, such as cognitive load;

It may also allude to its etymology; a word borrowed from French and Medieval Latin; French '*implicite,'* going back to Middle French, 'complicated, tangled', borrowed from Medieval Latin '*implicitus'* 'involved, complicated, implied', going back to Latin, 'involved, intricate', variant past participle of '*implicāre'* 'to fold about itself, entwine, involve' (Merriam-Webster. (n.d.)).

"Implicit bias" researchers have identified several conditions in which individuals are most likely to rely on their unconscious system, including situations involving ambiguous or incomplete information; for example, the presence of time constraints and circumstances in which our cognitive control may be compromised, such as fatigue or having a lot on our minds (Staats 2016, p. 29) Implicit bias may also refers to an automatic associations of stereotypes and attitudes towards a social groups. Those stereotypes and attitudes may result from

repeated exposure to cultural stereotypes in societies, forming the basis for implicit racial, gender, belief, ethnic, and other similar biases. Research has shown that stereotypes are automatically activated merely by encountering a member of a different social group. Under this exposure our judgment, action and decision may be unconsciously affected (Izumi 2017, p. 686) nonverbal behaviours are also shaped by unconscious attitudes and stereotypes. So, neutrality in practice is illusory because of the operation of implicit or unconscious bias (Izumi 2017, p. 685).

These actions or implicit bias may also affect the criteria or the means by which a peer-reviewed paper is assessed. While implicit biases can influence any decision-making process, they should not be interpreted as character defects or other indicators of whether or not someone is a "good person" (Staats 2016, p. 33) Implicit bias, according to study evidence, powerfully explains the persistence of many societal injustices, not only in education but also in other areas such as criminal justice, healthcare, and employment. While few people like the idea of being biased, considerable social science and neuroscience research has linked people's unconscious associations to disparate results, even among those who adamantly claim to be egalitarian (Staats 2016, p. 33) Taking the text below as an example, to analyses the implicit understanding a human mind may use to find the unfinished text.

> 'If you cna raed tihs praapragh, it's bcsecuae our mnids are vrey good at ptuting tgoehter peiecs of ifnroamtoin in a way taht is esay for us to make snese of. Our mnids do tihs atoumtaicllay, whituot ourcosncoius cotnrol.'

The implicit associations we hold arise outside of conscious awareness; therefore, they do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse. Little is known about how people incorporate information regarding unconscious bias into their discriminatory reasoning. While many researchers, activists, and journalists believe that educating the public about implicit bias will rally support to combat its discriminatory consequences, there is reason to believe that increased awareness of implicit bias may reduce the extent to which people hold others accountable for the discrimination it causes (Daumeyer et al. 2019, p. 1)

"Explicit bias" refers to the attitudes and beliefs that we have about a person or group on a conscious level. Much of the time, these biases and their expression arise as the direct result of a perceived threat. When people feel threatened, they are more likely to draw group boundaries to distinguish themselves from others (Clarke 2018, p. 513).

Scientific Objectivity

The objectivity of academic discourse in published texts configures the crucial process of peer review that determines compliance with quality standards in its evaluation, in theoretical-methodological congruence of the solidity of academic discourse and evidencing the progressive focus on human knowledge (Cuéllar 2022). Objectivity is a valuable asset. To call something objective implies

that it is significant to us and that we approve of it. There are different levels of objectivity. Claims, methods, results, and scientists can all be more or less objective, and the more objective, the better. Using the term 'objective' to describe something has a unique rhetorical force. The general public's admiration for science, as well as its authority in public life, stems in large part from the belief that science is objective, or at least more objective than other modes of inquiry (Reiss et al. 2020). If what makes science so great is its objectivity, then objectivity should be worth defending. Close examinations of scientific practice conducted by philosophers of science over the last fifty years, have revealed that several conceptions of the ideal of objectivity are either questionable or unattainable. The chances of a science providing a non-perspectival "view from nowhere" or proceeding in a manner uninformed by human goals and values are slim. When comparing Goethe to Newton, Stereotypical perspectives are obviously based on stereotypes—stock characterizations that are paraded as if they were genuine explanations. Newton was a scientist and Goethe was a poet (Sepper 2009, p 263); therefore, science has long been influenced by financial conflicts of interest, politics, belief, and other extensive list of prejudices. This however, has renewed concerns about the generation of partial data and conclusions, owing perhaps to the outsized influence of apparently "non-epistemic values," such as political ideology, religion and/or personal gain. Due to a number of factors — i.e., small sample sizes, small effect sizes, and ideological influences— scientist estimate that some published scientific findings are false (Ioannidis 2005). A key concern is that a researcher's preferences or values can contribute to the rationalization of experimental designs or interpretations of data that will bring the researcher status, support their favoured ideology, or promote what they perceive to be social justice (Wilholt 2009).

Scholarly Review, an Early Beginning

Following the establishment of national academies in Europe during the early 17th-century, this period is generally regarded as the beginning of the practice of scholarly review.--- Francis Bacon (1561-1626) enunciated a universal method of assessment of new science, which until then was called 'Natural science or Natural philosophy' a mixture of chemistry, philosophical view of God and creation, natural physics, early medical practice (anatomy) and obscure belief in alchemy; in his *"Novum Organum 1620"* Bacon inspired many English scholars, some whom engaged in an informal pattern of discussion to debate their views and opinions on unfolding science (Spier 2002, p. 357). Mario Biagioli (2002) has described in detail "the slow differentiation of peer review from book censorship" and the role state licensing and censorship systems played during the 16th-century in Europe (p. 31). By 1662 these small groups of discussion formed an official society or academy 'The Royal Charter of Incorporation' which later became "The Royal Society of London" for improving Natural Knowledge and "*L'Académie Royale des Sciences of Paris* - 1666" were established, both bodies created in-house journals, The *'Philosophical Transactions',* edited by Henry Oldenburg (c,1615-1677) (a German theologian, diplomat and natural philosopher) and the *'Journal*

des Sçavans' (Journal of the Learned; focusing on European history) respectively (Spier 2002, p. 357). These prototypical scientific journals gradually replaced the exchange of experimental reports and findings via correspondence, formalising a process that up until then had been essentially personal, informal, and nonasserted in nature (Lee et al. 2013, p. 3). From 1731 the *"Royal Society of Edinburgh"* had adopted a review process in which materials sent for publication were vetted and evaluated by knowledgeable members or an editorial board (Spier 2002, p. 357). From these early efforts gradually emerged the process of independent review of scientific reports by acknowledged experts that persists to this day. This was the early period of amateur scientists or so-called natural philosophers who "produced reliable new knowledge" for their times and following gentlemanly conversations with other likeminded figures, published their findings; however, professional science is not conducted by "logically well-informed sole knowers," mechanisms thus evolved to formalize the ways in which the trustworthiness of scientific findings could be verified and promulgated to a wider audience (Lee et al. 2013, p. 4).

It was the Newton Method ….

Introducing Sir Isaac Newton (1642 – 1726 / 27) would be a formidable task as his life has so much to offer in all aspects of human knowledge. His philosophy method is built based on mathematical empiricism, which promotes the idea that mathematical and physical laws may be revealed in the real world via experimentation and observation; developing a positive philosophical conception of space and the divine (Patron and Jose Domingo 2021).

The Newton – Gottfried W. Leibniz (1646-1716) controversy forms amongst others, one of the main debates in a clash of philosophical world views on the nature of God, matter and physics forces. These two systems of *'Natural philosophy'* were very different organizations of knowledge based on metaphysical philosophical belief and mechanical principles; or, it may also have been a communication problem more than a matter of definition. Having an inadequate communication over a meaning of words may bring more issues, if the participants had been able to define their terms, a controversy may not have arisen or at least have been quickly resolved (Iltis 1973, p. 343). Latin was perceived as the language of the elite, educated people knew it, so they used it to write to each-other. Most of their works made a huge and lasting contribution to the state of human knowledge. The transmission of ideas and the production of results depends upon communication among people working within a given system of *'Natural philosophy'* and between systems (Iltis 1973, p. 345); for example, Newtonian followers operating under this commitment viewed problems and competing theories with a different perception from those operating outside the group. As a result, the writings and experiments of adherents to other systems were perceived by them as a threat to the legitimacy of Newtonian natural philosophy (Iltis 1973, p. 345); to use a figure of speech it was a 'them against us' scenario where unconscious unfairness may be present in many different areas of science or philosophical concepts.

Many central debates in the philosophy of science have in one or another way to do with objectivity which is the property of various aspects of science. It exposed the idea that: scientific claims, method, results are not influenced by any particular perspective, value judgement, bias or personal interest to name a few relevant factors. 'Objectivity' is often considered to be an ideal for scientific enquiry and the basis for the authority of science and society (Reiss and Sprenger 2020). Since the establishment or introduction of the scientific method there have been many central debates in the philosophy of science that have, in one way or another to do with objectivity. Understanding the role of objectivity in science is therefore integral to a full appreciation of these debates. As this paper would present, it is impossible to fully appreciate the notion of scientific objectivity without touching upon some debates. The ideal of objectivity has been criticized repeatedly in the philosophy of science, questioning both its desirability and its attainability. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'objective' – 'as the lack of favouritism toward one side or another; freedom from bias;' (Merriam-Webster n.d.) assuming that a truth or independent reality exists outside of any investigation or observation. The researcher's task in this model is to uncover this reality without contaminating it in any way. In philosophy -objectivity- is the concept of truth independent from individual -subjectivity- ('bias' caused by one's perception, emotions, or imagination). Can anything truly be free from unintentional 'bias.'? A proposition is considered to have objective truth when its conditions are met without 'bias' caused by the mind of a sentient being. This debate leads us to one of the most profound cognitive biases which is the illusion of objectivity. This is the belief that we understand the world by direct perception. Whereas in fact, our understanding of even the simplest thing is guided by layers of cognitive processes deep rooted in the individual mind. A peer review method may rely on this process (the impression of objectivity) to accept or reject the publication of an article. Understanding scientific objectivity is therefore central to understanding the nature of science and the role it plays in society. A discussion of the scientific method and the arguments against its attainability and desirability, as well as the value of freedom and the notion of absence of personal bias, is included in this explanation of the natural conception of objectivity known as the faithfulness of facts. This idea's intuitive appeal is called into question when talking about the scientific method and the arguments that dispute both its desirability and its attainability; the value of freedom and the idea of absence of personal bias (Reiss et al. 2020).

'Bias'

The term "bias" is often used pejoratively to refer to unfairly or unwarrantedly favouring an idea or individual. In the context of scientific investigation, a preference for a certain idea (i.e., a hypothesis, interpretation, or approach) can deviate from truth or be unwarranted by the evidence. Importantly, the term "bias" can be used even more broadly to include nobler tendencies toward accepting a particular conclusion, such as a bias toward the truth. Let us broadly say that in human psychology a bias is a tendency to favour a certain conclusion. Although in

paradigmatic cases the conclusion is favoured in an unwarranted way, we would see that it is not inherently objectionable to have one's reasoning guided by one's goals and values (May 2021, p. 22); it may be common that in science, an investigator's values can readily serve as sources of bias. Since one's values generally give rise to corresponding personal motivations, it can influence various decisions made during scientific investigation.

For example, a researcher may be inclined to have positive feedback with the hypothesis, method and result chosen by the investigator; which could lead to an analysis bias (May 2021, p. 22) Even the decision to publish or report a particular finding can be influenced by a researcher's desire to construct a manuscript narrative that is more likely to survive peer review—a form of publication bias which refers as the failure to publish results of a study on the basis of the direction or strength of the finding (Franco et al. 2014). A questionable practice on the rise is the reporting of and reliance on "marginally significant" results; this report is slightly higher in value and it could be significant to ultimately support a hypothesis. Personal goal, and the failure to disclose the method or data which could affect the final conclusion (May 2021, p. 23) In science, such a "factual" motive could even incentivize questionable research practices in order to promote a finding that one is already convinced is true (May 2021, p. 23; Bright 2017).

How Many Types of Bias Are There?

Murphy (2021) showed numerous sorts of prejudice that were determined based on two types of main differences:

a) 'Cognitive bias'. This is the most common sort of bias. According to research, there are over 175 different types of cognitive bias. It refers to a divergence from judgment norms in which you may make unjustified inferences, evaluations, or impressions. You may also recall past events wrongly. These perceptions can influence a person's behaviour or attitude, either positively or negatively.

Indeed, 'cognitive biases' frequently work through reasons. Instead of simply choosing the preferred conclusion, humans strangely devise reasons, even if they are dubious, to justify their decisions to others and, more importantly, to themselves. Providing reasons for a specific conclusion is what we call "rationalization," which is often used negatively, but it also has a positive connotation. (May 2021, p. 3345/66) Sometimes we make a choice or form a belief automatically or intuitively and only later —'post hoc'— come up with a justification for why, and one that may or may not correspond with the reasons that drove us to the conclusion in the first place (May 2021, p. 3345/66). Reasoning and rationalization can also occur before a decision —'ante hoc'— in order to justify it in the first place (May 2021). The most familiar ante hoc rationalization is a form of motivated reasoning, which has been studied extensively (May 2021, Ditto et al. 2009).

b) 'Implicit bias'. Within the epistemology standpoint, there is scope for claims not just about truth but also about prejudice. However, these can be formulated in different ways. Bias could be seen as an inevitable feature of the beliefs of those who do not share a similar standpoint position; their views of the world may be unnecessarily ideological. Meanwhile, those who do share a similar standpoint would be viewed as not subject to bias by virtue of their social setting. Alternatively, along the lines of our formulation of the fishbowl analogy (we are all immersed in a paradigm and reality, much like a fish in the water it swims in), it might be argued that the difference between those who do and do not have a similar standpoint is the nature of the bias that their position supplies. Either way, both true and false standpoints are seen as social products, so that whether a knowledge claim is true or not is determined not by whether it has been shaped by the personal and social characteristics of the researcher but by the nature of those characteristics (Hammersley and Gomm 1997).

Clarifying the usage and term 'bias' outlines the ambiguities that surround it; arguing that these arise in part from the fact that there has been a reliance on an epistemology which is inadequate. The argument also posits that radical epistemological alternatives, such as relativism and standpoint theory, do not provide us with a viable substitute for its definition (Hammersley and Gomm 1997).

Literature Review

Human thinking is an indirect reflection of the fundamental characteristics and relationships between things. When writing an academic article, authors may entertain their thoughts about any possible rejection or may also think about how to minimize the risk or avoid any rejection. Publications in high-ranking journals are essential for career advancement and knowledge development. Journals are the custodians of humanistic and scientific knowledge, as well as a means of advancing knowledge sharing (Morgan 1984, p. 965). There is substantial literature and publications from various fields such as psychology, sociology, statistics, and science, on the topic presented under this title. This paper employs a descriptive approach to comprehend what rejection, bias, and prejudice mean in the context of this discussion. Taken into consideration divergent thinking, as an unstructured approach to problem solving that aims to generate numerous solutions, to which some authors may have made a connection with mind mapping (a method for expressing ideas in a graphical format that encourages divergent thinking). However, it is more common to think of lateral thinking as looking for one solution to a problem. Lateral thinking can also be thought of as a way to find new solutions, alternatives, or points of view to consider. It might present alternative solutions to a problem or raise more issues that need to be taken into account, which would prevent acceptance. Yet again, there is no intent to disregard lateral

or divergent thinking, as an alternative, to which some authors have connected to mind mapping.

This discourse also builds on and defines key words to better comprehend their meaning. To reiterate the purpose of this paper is to present an overall view on the reason why submitted academic articles may fail to be admitted for publication. The classification system may be used to understand general literature that is available in printing or electronically via the internet. This discussion may be useful as a recommendation in any academic field, raising awareness among students and teaching supervisors on the reasons and factors underlying the rejection of articles and about the struggle to understand these distinctive factors of evaluation.

Aim

Today, there are literally thousands (estimates may vary considerably depending on the continent) of peer-reviewed journals in existence, although the severity and consistency with which peer review procedures are applied across this population vary considerably. The aim of this paper is to identify the most common reasons why article submissions to double-blind peer-reviewed journals are rejected during the submission and post-review stages. We hope that this paper will raise some rhetorical questions and provide an explanation of the term used to better understand the issue at its inception. We also expect the paper to contribute and serve as a guideline for young researchers hoping to publish an acceptable paper, as well as to prevent future contributors from being rejected. It is vital to study and understand definitions and descriptions of this process before reaching any final judgement.

Methodology

In a peer review, the planning process evidences the implicit social cognition in the objective field to be evaluated and the strengthening of quality standards in published texts that favour the review process in the comments and evaluations of experts (Abadal and Da-Silbeira 2020). To lessen the burden of rejection caused by peer-reviews unintentional bias, which may be used as an approach, this study uses empirical a-priory evidence and metaphorical discussion on the topic presented. Furthermore, the authors will present four areas of discussion, which are critical for this theoretical discussion and understanding the definitions, steps, and dynamics of any ‘article submission’ to journals before reaching, yielding and drawing any final conclusions.

Discussion and Results

Recently, 'Conflict of Interest' (COI), have been a part of the much literature develop in the popular press of social sciences and scientific research journals. This 'COI' occurs when an individual, peer-review, or personal interest are in conflict with their objective obligations. Rejection of articles by the peer-review process may bring negative consequences to the researcher (Young 2009, p. 412) This bring the discussion presented here, which is drafted into four areas, such as: 1) single versus (vs) double peer-review, advantage and disadvantage; 2) manuscript rejection-causes; 3) discrimination-prejudice; and finally, 4) the Matthew effect.

However, before moving on with the discussion and aim of this argument, it would be *'fair'* to single out and provide and explanation of certain words used which are essential to clarify the position of this paper. Unfairness or 'unfair,' may be better explained from its etymological meaning before moving onto the discussion. The online etymology Dictionary refers to old English '*unfægr*,' which is 'unlovely, not beautiful, deformed, hideous, unlovable,' from un- 'not' + fair (adjective). With similar formation in Old Norse 'ufagr', Gothic 'unfargs.' Which means 'evil, bad,' was recorded from c, 1300. (Harper (n.d.)). Scientific quality must be recognized not only as a motivator for individual scientists, but also as a key to the funding required to keep the scientific machine running. 'Unfair' research evaluation is thus a major source of frustration in scientific communities around the world, as well as a potential threat to the entire scientific enterprise (Seglen 1998, p. 224). Traditional peer review is too often conducted using superficial criteria (personal or institutional reputation, project relevance, journal prestige, crude publication counts, and so on), and is widely regarded as a lottery, not without reason.

1) Single-Double Blind Reviews: Advantages and/or Disadvantages

What does the title above have to offer? To begin with, very much has been discussed about 'peer-review;' however, one thing that the academic community and most scientists do agree on is that much of what we read has been improved enormously by thoughtful and critical peer review in general. The fundamental principle is straightforward: experts in a given domain appraise the professional performance, creativity, or quality of scientific work produced by others in their field or area of competence (Lee et al. 2013) Peer reviewers make an invaluable contribution to manuscripts that are under consideration for publication by journals (Lee et al. 2013, Rye et al. 2021) This is especially true in the case of submissions that clearly have merit but are incomplete or less focused. A high-quality peer reviewer often helps turn these manuscripts into compelling publications that attract the attentions of the community of readers. Advances in knowledge, and in science particularly, also requires rigorous validation. Therefore, peer reviewers play a vital role in this process (Rye et al. 2021). Good reviewers unerringly identify gaps and inconsistencies in manuscripts presented, offering constructive feedback for their resolution. So, excellence in peer review is something that does not come naturally to anyone; it takes a lot of experience to be able to provide

authors with concise and balanced feedback that may be implemented. It is important that the peer-review contribution in the manner of feedback does not compromise the quality of the article and aims to improve it. Although there is no doubt that some of these changes will create challenges, their implementation creates the potential to bring major benefits that should serve as a role model for peer review across the broader scientific community.

2) Manuscript Rejection: Causes

Researchers may want to contribute to knowledge with the publication of a manuscript which has gone through single or double peer review besides all necessary steps for its acceptance. In any given year journals publish, at a conservative estimate, over a million articles. Each one of those articles will, in all likelihood, have been read by at least one, often two, and sometimes three or more reviewers, selected by the journal's Editor-In-Chief, and most of those submissions will have undergone multiple rounds of review prior to eventual publication in a journal of record (Lee et al. 2013, p. 4). Those papers that are rejected will also have consumed a great deal of reviewer time. Moreover, at least some of those rejected papers will be resubmitted to a different journal (possibly more than one) in an effort to be published. Kravitz and Baker (2011) stated: *"each submission of a rejected manuscript requires the entire machinery of peer review to creak to life anew,"* creating, in effect, *"a journal loop bounded only by the number of journals available and the dignity of the authors"* (1). This may be only part of the story, other research councils, foundations, universities, and public-private grant-awarding bodies also need to call upon the service area of blind review experts to evaluate the millions of research proposals, intra- and extramural, seeking funding at any given time of the year. Again, this is not always the case; manuscript rejection occurs often (Dhammi and Rehan-Ul-Haq 2018, p. 97). Hall and Wilcox concluded that 62% of the published papers have been rejected at least once (Dhammi and Rehan-Ul-Haq 2018, p. 97, Menon et al. 2022, p. 59). This rejection rate may be the result of different sets of rules being applied by better quality journals. Most significant journals may highlight this issue in their weblink with a disclosure:

> "Authors are notified that the process is very competitive, and that on average for all our publications less than 20% of papers considered, are finally accepted for publication. Thus, before submitting, make sure that your paper meets the academic standards of scholarly research. Please, make sure that you have reviewed and cited the most important and recent English references that relate to your research." (Academic Journals, "Paper Submission-Review-Acceptance-Publication" section, n.d, para 4).

This reveals that 80% of the manuscripts submitted for a blind review are rejected. For a manuscript to be acceptable, it must deal with a topic which is new, important, interesting to the target reader, and most importantly advances knowledge and understanding in a certain field. Every journal has a well-defined mandate and target audience. Authors must ensure that they submit to a journal

within the scope of which their manuscript lies. Manuscripts outside the scope are usually rejected without an external peer review (Pierson 2004). Some reasons why manuscripts may not be considered for publication could fall into various areas such as, originality, ethical and language (Adib and Nimehchisalem 2021, p. 4):

a) structure and content of the research; such as poor hypothesis, lack of research methodology, an improper use of statistical methods, and a lack of proper current bibliography;
b) ethical misconduct and plagiarism; inappropriate discussion and conclusion matching the research question presented; and,
c) poor language skills/proficiency; when it comes to manuscripts, written language is the mode of communication that connects authors and their readers. Language is a vessel that transcends authors' ideas, and its quality is of great importance. Even if the content of the paper is original, novel, and well-thought-out, poor language skills make it difficult for peer-viewers, reviewers, and readers to understand what is expressed throughout the paper. Accurate terminology and well-expressed ideas increase the effectiveness of language and enable the information expressed in the paper to be fully understood (Kumar and Rao 2018).

This common and fatal flaw most often leads to manuscript rejection, another reason that may also lead to rejection could be perceived as the lack of novelty/ originality in the research question. However, in this process of judging novelty/ originality of the manuscript by editors and peer reviewers has a definite element of subjectivity involved that can be seen as 'bias' or 'prejudice' (Menon et al. 2022, p. 64). It must be stated that every journal has a well-designed and defined mandate and area of expertise (Dhammi and Rehan-Ul-Haq 2018, p. 97, Menon et al. 2022, p. 59). Knowing the usual reasons for manuscript rejection can alert prospective authors to common errors and flaws in conducting research. It will also inform them about what the editors and peer reviewers look for in a manuscript, so that they can plan their research better and increase its chances of getting published (Menon et al. 2022, p. 60). This study may show some limitations due to the fact that every journal has its own workflow and hence, the results may not be extended to other journals, particularly those with a niche focus. Nonetheless, there are numerous opportunities for authors to plan and present their study in a way that persuades reviewers of its potential value. Finally, it is possible that the rejected manuscript may have other shortcomings too that are not mentioned in this paper. Acceptance without any changes is extremely rare. Even the best written papers still contain some minor flaws (Kumar and Rao 2018).

3) Discrimination: Prejudice

What constitutes discrimination-prejudice in a blind manuscript peer review? Any manuscript is typically sent to one or two reviewers, with or without the author's name and contact information, to conduct an academic expertise

information (content) evaluation of the document. First it is necessary to introduce a definition of the term 'discrimination.' To capture its positive and negative connotations is both ubiquitous and necessary (Hellman 2008, p. 13). "Discrimination," Wouter Vandenhole finds that "there is no universally accepted definition of discrimination" (Altman 2020), the etymology term '*discriminates*' appeared in the early 17th century in the English language. It is from the Latin '*discriminat*' – 'distinguished between', from the verb, '*discriminare*,' from discrimen 'distinction', from the verb, *discernere*. Since the American Civil War (1861–1865) the term "*discrimination*" (Salentin and Heitmeyer 2022) generally evolved in the American English usage as an understanding of prejudicial treatment of an individual based solely on their race, later generalized as membership in a certain socially undesirable group or social category. Perhaps there is a positive notion of the term 'prejudice' exposed by Gadamer's, the conception of prejudice (German *Vorurteil*) that goes back to the meaning of the term as literally a *pre-judgment* (from the Latin *prae-judicium*) that was lost during the Renaissance (Malpas 2022). Before this sense of the word became almost universal, it was a synonym for discernment, tact and culture as in "*taste and discrimination*", generally a laudable attribute; to "discriminate against" being commonly disparaged. Moral philosophers have defined discrimination using a moralized definition; however, most discussions on 'moral' are centred on the concept of 'virtue' (Homiak 2019), so under this approach, discrimination may be defined as acts, practices, or policies that wrongfully impose a relative disadvantage or deprivation on persons based on their membership in a salient social group. This is a comparative definition. An individual need not be actually harmed in order to be discriminated against.

4) The 'Matthew Effect'

The terminology "The Matthew Effect" is used here for practical reasons and to honour the historical account of Harriet Zuckerman's (b, 1937) hours-long interview with various Nobel laureates in 1960 (Zuckerman 1972), which suggested that eminent scientists get a disproportionate amount of credit for their contributions to science while relatively unknown ones tend to get disproportionately little for their occasionally comparable contributions (Merton 1988, p. 606, Zuckerman 1967)**.** This effect has become widely acknowledged in the West and has close ties with several other concepts in the social and natural sciences and it is debatable (Perc 2014, p. 1); it may serve to heighten the visibility of contributions to science by scientists of acknowledged standing and to reduce the visibility of contributions by authors who are less well known. This could be an ironic or negative disadvantaged position, where well-known authors may be favoured over less well-known or unknown authors. The initial problem is transformed by a shift in theoretical perspective and practices. By shifting the angle of vision, it is possible to note other possible kinds of consequences, such as unconscious bias which may lead to an increase in the number of acceptances or rejections of articles for publication. As one of Zuckerman's interviewees, a Nobel laureate in physics said: *'the world is peculiar in this matter of how it gives credit.*

It tends to give credit to those already famous people' (Merton 1988, p. 606)**.** It goes without saying that the nature and caliber of these contributions widely praised by the scientific community must be the same or at least very similar in order for the claim that established scientists receive preferential treatment when it comes to equal peer review and primary recognition for their scientific work to be considered true. That criterion is satisfied in instances of collaboration, it can be difficult to distinguish between the distinctive contributions of collaborators or independent discoveries that, if not exactly the same, at least resemble one another enough to be regarded as functional equivalents by the principals involved or by their knowledgeable peers. In papers jointly published by scientists of markedly unequal rank and reputation, another laureate in physics reports, *"the man who's best known gets more credit, an inordinate amount of credit"* or as a laureate in chemistry put it, *"If my name was on a paper, people would remember it and not remember who else was involved"* (Merton 1988, p. 608). These examples may bring some light into the issue of single or double peer-review. At the extreme, such misallocation of credit can occur even when a published paper bears only the name of a hitherto unknown and uncredentialed scientist.

As a result, in the review process, the rejection of the manuscript in the context of the constructivist perspective infers mourning for a rejected scientific article, in terms of the idea of leaving behind the article or the possibility of publication in a certain journal and instead, focus on building a new project, or investigating other publishing opportunities. This means accepting the negative situation and moving forward, rather than getting stuck in grief and wanting to get back what has been lost. In this case, the action could be to seek publication opportunities, either in other magazines or in other types of media, or even the creation of a new project, assuming that this rejection does not mean the end of the project, the scientific career or the area of human knowledge in which the author or authors have affiliation. Focusing on the future, generating the construction of new opportunities, instead of remaining trapped in what happened and the loss of the article due to the impossibility of publication (Villarreal-Ríos et al. 2021).

In a positive context, the new generation of researchers, who have grown with the new technologies, have a greater facility to adapt to the change of using the new communication and collaboration platforms. This allows them to fully explore the possibilities of the new tools to collaborate and share with their colleagues around the world and to increase their visibility and impact in the field of research. The new communication and collaboration platforms, such as scientific social networks and open access repositories, allow researchers to share and discuss their research with colleagues around the world and obtain valuable feedback and comments, improving academic impact in the field of research. Combining all this, the new generation of researchers have a greater awareness of the importance of open science and the need to share their research in a transparent and accessible way, favouring contributing to a more collaborative and open academic culture to adapt to the new technologies and platforms (Rodríguez-Bravo and Nicholas 2019).

However, according to Cortés Guerrero (2022) in his editorial, "The pressure to publish: Pandemic and Academy" (2022), the undue pressure exerted by some

authors to have their text published despite having been rejected in the process is not ignored. Peer review under the double-blind modality is a serious problem in the community.

Conclusion

An important aspect which affects the publishing process of a paper is the choice of the publication venue. Authors should cater their submissions to the criteria set by the desired journal's editorial board and reviewers in order to prevent their submissions from being excluded-rejected and make sure they have complied with all necessary requirements and steps. It is much more gratifying to an editor/editorial to accept a good paper rather than rejecting a poor one, yet most editors reject a great many manuscripts. Editors try to view rejections as positive acts that define the journal's content and set its standards, but, of course, this is only the journal's particular point of view. Certainly, anything the editor can do to soften the blow would be humane and wise: humane because the author is deserving of courtesy at all times, and wise because authors judge a journal to some extent by the quality of its publications, authors are often in many ways the journal's most active readers.

Would exercising a freedom of choice be an exempted from any implicit or explicit, conscious or unconscious - intentional or unintentional type of 'bias?' When performing a double peer-review of any academic paper, reviewers may not deal with the authors or institutions names as they are not part of the requirement sent to them by the editors; but what about exercising the freedom of personal choice? Would reviewers be able to call it "biases"? Can reviewers reject or recommend a paper for publication just based on their own personal preferences, professional experience and expertise, regardless of the controversies it may present to them dealing with themes such as discrimination based on the papers title, language and/or narrative? Could this then be called 'bias' or prejudice against other reviewer articles if they are not selected? If (peer-reviewers) rely and use the best of their cultural background, professional experience, expertise, and objective knowledge to resolve and reach a conclusion; could it be called yet again 'unconscious-unintentional bias?' We are human's, who think, feel and act; it is our nature to interact and pass judgements every single day from the moment waking up until it is time to sleep. In real-life implications of implicit biases can create invisible barriers to opportunity and achievement for some of the researchers—a stark contrast to the values and intentions of researcher whom dedicate their professional lives to their personal success. Thus, it is critical for researchers to identify any discrepancies that may exist between their conscious ideals and unconscious associations so that they can mitigate the effects of those implicit pre-sponsions, thereby improving their outcomes and allowing then to reach their full potential. As a result, … Achieving objective results may be hampered by postmodernist views of truth, which hold that nothing is permanent, that truth is always relative, and that objectivity is impossible. Given the scientific

method's core commitment to truth and rationality, such viewpoints or biases can definitely conflict with any scientific enterprise.

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