



## Multiple Publications, Paper Mill, Overlapping Reports: Ethical Discussion in Journalism

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the ethical implications of multiple publications, paper mills, and overlapping reports in journalism. As digital media and the pressure to produce content at a rapid pace grow, journalists face increasing challenges in maintaining integrity and accuracy in their work. Multiple publication raises concerns about plagiarism, lack of originality, and the erosion of journalistic standards. Furthermore, paper mills, which are platforms that generate news articles automatically without human oversight, complicate ethical considerations by blurring the distinction between human-authored and algorithmically-generated content. Furthermore, overlapping reports can result in duplications, contradictions, and misinformation when multiple journalists cover the same event or topic. These ethical quandaries necessitate a thorough examination of journalistic practices, editorial guidelines, and professional accountability. This paper provides a thoughtful discussion on how journalism can navigate these challenges and ensure responsible reporting in the digital era by analyzing case studies and engaging in ethical debates.

**Keywords:** Multiple, publication, paper mill, overlapping, report, ethic.

### Introduction

The rise of digital media and the increasing demand for quick content production has had a significant impact on the field of journalism. As a result, journalists face new challenges in maintaining their work's integrity and accuracy. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the ethical implications of multiple publications, paper mills, and overlapping reports in journalism.

Multiple publications refers to the phenomenon in which multiple news outlets publish identical or nearly identical articles. Concerns have been raised about plagiarism, a lack of originality, and the potential erosion of journalistic standards as a result of this practice.

Because of the ease with which information is available and the pressure to be the first to report on a story, journalists may copy or slightly modify content from other sources without proper attribution. This not only undermines the credibility of journalism, but also reduces the value of original reporting. Another ethical issue is the presence of paper mills, which are platforms that automatically generate news articles without proper human oversight. These web-based platforms blur the line between human-authored and algorithm-generated content. Journalists may unknowingly rely on paper mill articles, delivering information to the public that lacks the critical analysis, fact-checking, and journalistic expertise required for responsible reporting.

Furthermore, overlapping reports, which occur when multiple journalists cover the same event or topic, can lead to duplications, contradictions, and the spread of misinformation. This occurs when, due to time constraints, journalists repeat information from previous reports without verifying or independently correlating the facts. As a result, conflicting information can be confusing and impair audiences' ability to form accurate interpretations of current events. Because of these ethical quandaries, a thorough examination of journalistic practices, editorial guidelines, and professional accountability is required. It is critical to promote responsible reporting by developing clear guidelines that address issues like plagiarism, reliance on paper mills, and the importance of independent verification. Furthermore, news organizations must prioritize journalist training and education on these ethical issues to ensure that they are ready to face the challenges.

In this paper, we will look at case studies and engage in ethical debates to provide a thoughtful discussion on how journalism can effectively address these challenges. By exploring ethical implications, identifying best practices, and emphasizing the importance of responsible reporting, we hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation about maintaining journalistic integrity in an increasingly complex and fast-paced media landscape.

## **When an author published several articles in a short period, is there any problem?**

There is no inherent problem with an author publishing several articles in a short period. In fact, it can be seen as a positive sign of productivity and a strong work ethic. However, certain factors should be taken into consideration:

1. **Quality:** While quantity is important, the quality of the articles should not be compromised. Rushing to publish numerous articles may result in a decline in the standard of writing or research. Authors should ensure that each article maintains its integrity and adds value to their field of expertise.
2. **Originality:** It is crucial to ensure that each article is unique and not a repetition or slight variation of previously published work. Plagiarism or self-plagiarism can harm an author's credibility and negatively impact their reputation.
3. **Exhaustion of Ideas:** Publishing too many articles in a short span may lead to a depletion of original ideas or research material. Authors should strive to maintain a balance between productivity and maintaining the freshness and novelty of their work.

4. **Peer Review and Feedback:** The fast-paced publishing of multiple articles may limit the opportunity for thorough peer review and feedback. Authors should ensure that their work undergoes appropriate scrutiny to maintain the overall quality and accuracy.
5. **Time for Reflection:** Taking time between articles allows for reflection, analysis, and improvements. Rushed publications may lead to oversights or missed opportunities to explore alternative perspectives or refine arguments.

In summary, publishing several articles in a short period can be beneficial, but authors must maintain a balance between quantity and quality, while ensuring the originality and value of their work.

Additionally, writing numerous letter to editor articles, of which each letter to editor corresponding to individual different published articles, is this unethical or not?

### **Salami publication, an actual problem**

There are several potential issues with salami publication, which is the practice of breaking up research findings into multiple smaller publications instead of presenting them as a comprehensive study [1 - 2]:

1. **Fragmentation of knowledge:** Salami publication can result in fragmented knowledge, where important findings are dispersed across multiple papers, making it difficult for researchers and readers to fully grasp the complete picture. This may hinder progress in the field and lead to a lack of comprehensive understanding.
2. **Duplication of efforts:** When research findings are sliced and published as separate papers, there is a higher chance of duplication, where similar studies or analyses are reported multiple times. This wastes valuable resources and can confuse the scientific community.
3. **Lack of context:** By dividing research into separate papers, the context and background information necessary for understanding the significance of the findings may be lost. Readers may struggle to understand the relevance and impact of the research without this contextual information.
4. **Bias towards positive results:** Salami publication can potentially lead to a bias towards reporting positive or significant findings while disregarding negative or non-significant results. This publication bias can skew the overall understanding of a particular research area and may mislead future studies or clinical decisions.
5. **Time and resource constraints:** Researchers may engage in salami publication due to pressure to publish frequently or to maximize their publication output. This can result in a rush to publish incomplete or less substantial findings, leading to a lower quality of research overall.
6. **Ethical concerns:** Some argue that salami publication goes against the principles of scientific integrity and transparency. By dividing research into smaller parts, researchers may manipulate or exaggerate the significance of their findings, compromising the credibility of the research and the scientific community.

Efforts to address salami publication include promoting pre-registration of studies, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive reporting, and encouraging researchers to prioritize quality over quantity in their publications.

The good example of salami publications are the set of serial publication on biomarker studies on the same group of patients in the same setting.

## Paper mill, ethical problem

Paper mills refer to companies or individuals who provide ghostwriting services for research articles or papers. They essentially create research papers without the actual involvement of the listed authors. This practice is considered unethical in the field of research publication for several reasons [3].

1. **Academic integrity:** The purpose of research papers is to reflect the genuine work of the researchers who conducted the study. Ghostwriting undermines academic honesty and integrity by misrepresenting authorship and failing to recognize the true contributors to the research.
2. **Attribution and credit:** Researchers deny due credit to those who have made significant contributions to the research by using paper mills. Individuals who have conducted experiments, analyzed data, or provided intellectual support may be included. Accurate attribution is critical for recognizing and advancing the careers of researchers.
3. **Transparency and accountability:** The use of paper mills frequently involves the concealment of ghostwriter involvement, resulting in a lack of transparency in the research process. Authorship must be transparent and clear in order for readers and reviewers to understand the research's credibility, potential conflicts of interest, and affiliations.
4. **Quality and reliability of research:** Paper mills may jeopardize research quality because ghostwriters may lack the expertise or understanding of the field required to produce high-quality work. This undermines the credibility of the research being published, potentially leading to the dissemination of misleading or incorrect information.
5. **Ethical misconduct:** The use of paper mills violates academic institutions', journals', and funding agencies' ethical guidelines. These guidelines stress the importance of truthful authorship, responsible research, and adherence to ethical standards. Researchers who engage in such practices risk being disciplined and having their professional reputation harmed.

Finally, paper mills and the practice of ghostwriting are considered unethical in the field of research publication. They jeopardize academic integrity, transparency, and research quality. To preserve the scientific community's integrity, researchers should adhere to the principles of responsible authorship and ethical behavior.

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