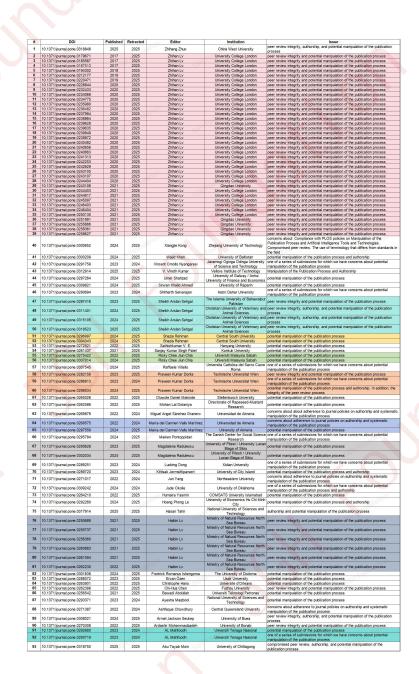


PLoS ONE Retracted 93 Articles due to Potential Manipulation of the Publication Process

Up to June 26th, PLoS, a academic publisher in the United States, had retracted 93 articles on the journal "PLoS ONE" due to "potential manipulation of the publication process" and related issues, such as "peer review integrity" and "concerns about the authorship".



Several academic editors were listed on multiple retracted articles as the handling editors. Among those 93 articles, 38 articles were handled by LV Zhihan with University College London and/or Qingdao University, and 28 articles were handled by LV Haibin with Ministry of Natural Resources North Sea Bureau, China.

It is interesting to note that other 13 articles handled by LV Zhihan were retracted due to "peer review integrity" and other issues [1], while other 6 articles handled by LV Haibin were also retracted due to similar reasons. Indeed, 51 of 54 articles (the number of 53 in the previous report [1] is incorrect) handled LV Zhihan have been retracted, and ALL articles handled by LV Haibin also have been retracted.

Other academic editor, such as Sheikh Arslan Sehgal, Praveen Kumar Donta, Magdalena Radulescu etc., were also listed as handling editors on multiple retracted articles.

In addition to those 93 articles whose retraction notes specifically mentioned "potential manipulation of the publication process", larger number of articles were retracted due to "concerns on peer review integrity", which also indicates that the publication process was manipulated.

The publications of those articles can date back to 2017 and earlier, and some were published in this year (2025), suggesting that the publisher and its journals are still under the attracts from the paper-mill.

It is also note that the problematic articles published in 2021 and earlier were exclusively handled by LV Zhihan and LV Haibin (excerpt for one were handled by Bawadi Abdullah), however, the problematic articles published more recently were assigned to different academic editors.

For each academic editor, (except for LV Zhihan and LV Haibin), the problematic articles were a small proportion of their editorial contributions. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether those academic editors were parts of the paper-mill, without detailed disclosure from the publisher/journals about their investigations.

However, up to now, the publisher did not disclose how the publication process was manipulated, and whether the academic editors who handled the manuscripts intentionally got involved in the cases.

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[1] 5GH-WuGH-2025.000064

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