Author’s response to reviews

Title: Quantifying Professionalism in Peer Review

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Author’s response to reviews:

We would like to thank the editor for this third round of revisions. Below we address each point.

Comment 1: “Abstract We evaluated 1491 sets of reviewer comment – comments”
Response: This change was made.

Comment 2: “(denoted as case studies). – remove, as its not mentioned again in the abstract”
Response: This change was made.

Comment 3: “inaccurate of unsubstantiated critiques – or”
Response: This change was made.

Comment 4: “Descriptive statistics were used to document frequency of occurrence. – please change to Results are presented as absolute numbers and percentages”
Response: This change was made.

Comment 5: “12% of comment sets – plist list number (12 %), as well as …and number (41%)”
Response: This change has been made.

Comment 6: “Conclusions- I would suggest rewriting the whole section to: Our study has shown that more than 43% of all reviews contained either unprofessional or IIUC comments. As such comments may lead to psychological distress of (early stage) investigators, it is perhaps time a reviewer code of conduct is developed and implemented in scholarly communication.”
Response: We have elected to retain the original prose as we feel the changes alter the conviction we have in our presented solution.
Comment 7: “Methods: 1) retrieved from Publons – remove retrieved from, as sentence says were obtained From”
Response: This change was made.

Comment 8: “ to avoid double brackets please change: having obtained their terminal degree (PhD or MSc) to having obtained their PhD or MSc degrees”
Response: Double brackets were removed.

Comment 9: “ were the base unit of replication – I suggest removing of replication”
Response: We have retained this prose as it best describes the lowest level of replication in this study.

Comment 10: “ For consistency could you please start every domain explanation in the same way – e.g. Comment sets that included…. instead of Some comments accused, Often reviewers state that authors, These reviews were superficial and so on.”
Response: We have elected to retain the prose as is. Starting each paragraph in the same way, while consistent, is very repetitive and difficult to read.

Comment 11: “Please always report absolute numbers and then percentage in the brackets. You can state number and percentage, i.e. 400 (27%), or use descriptives – i.e. almost a third of comment sets (n=400, 27%)…”
Response: This change was made in the results.

Comment 12: “Discussion 1) Please add – Previously, Silbiger and Stubler …”
Response: This change was made.

Comment 13: “ It is difficult – Our results make it difficult to describe peer-review as collegial”
Response: We have retained the original prose as it flows better with the paragraph.

Comment 14: “ that such a high level of demeaning behaviour would be tolerated – why such high level of demeaning behavior is tolerated”
Response: We have not inserted “why” into this sentence as it would no longer make grammatical sense.

Comment 15: “The author of case 210 study one received the most unprofessional comments – please change to: We have also observed clustering of unprofessional comments. For example, one of the early carer researchers received IIUC and unprofessional comments in more than third of all reviews he received, but they were all related to 4 manuscripts? – Do I understand you correctly? Please provide bit more clarification for this, does this mean something like 12 first round plus 12 second round comments? Or so on?”
Response: This section has been clarified (Lines 213-226).

Comment 16: “ as only manuscripts that were eventually published were assessed. Please add the sentence - In every instance in our dataset, the accusation of questionable research practices were a result of miscommunication or differences of opinion in research methodologies. immediately after the one I mentioned first, and change were to seem to have been.”
Response: We have not relocated this sentence as when this was done, the paragraph was difficult to read. We have elected to retain the original prose.

Comment 17: “It is possible that such accusations have identified misconduct and resulted in justified rejection. – I don’t not understand how can both options you say be true – if all were published, it seems there was no misconduct, but rather miscommunication as you said previously? Please rewrite this whole paragraph – and be a bit clearer what you mean with reviewers should proceed cautiously. Perhaps use an example, e.g. instead of implying that researchers were lazy or did not conduct proper literature search, reviewers could state that their paper could benefit from expanding their literature search on the topic.”
Response: This section has been clarified.

Comment 18: “Five criteria were employed to – We employed 5 criteria”
Response: This change was made.

Comment 20: “Such reviews will do little to help improve a manuscript – Such reviewers are unlikely to improve a manuscript…”
Response: This change was made.

Comment 21: “Such comments resulted in manuscripts being rejected for vague, and in some cases, arguably incorrect reasons. – You do not mention in results that you had access to final decision of papers, nor how your classification is found based on final decisions – so please refrain from stating this, or provide a paragraph in the results about the final decisions for the manuscripts in your corpus”
Response: We now provide this detail between Lines 83-85.

Comment 22: “Differences between reviewer comments in Plubons and author case studies is unsurprising given that uploading reviews to Plubons is optional and likely prone selection bias – add here, as well as that the young researchers who shared their reviews are also very likely to be those who encountered them more often than others.”
Response: This information is already provided between Lines 358-362.

Comment 23: “data-driven solutions – please remove this, as this is not true – you would have needed to test those solutions before you say they are data driven”
Response: This was removed.

Comment 24: “For instance, in one Ecology and Evolution case, a reviewer strongly critiqued the use of Poisson regression to analyze over dispersed count data, an established method of analysis. This case highlights that not all reviewers will have the required expertise to evaluate all statistical analyses. More broadly, - I would advise deleting this, the discussion section is already quite long, please maybe just say: Instead, we counted instances where reviewers attacked commonly used methods, which raises the question if all peer reviewers are indeed always qualified to criticize other researchers papers.”
Response: We have elected to keep this prose as the example well describes the issues we identified, as well as helps elucidate a broader category of identified issues.