



## Academic Dishonesty in Publication of Qualitative Studies

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Received 2020 May 19; Accepted 2020 June 28.

**Keywords:** Scientific Misconduct, Scientific Dishonesties, Ethics in Publishing, Qualitative, Research

### Dear Editor,

One of the core principles in research, which must be observed by professors and students, is academic honesty in the publication and release of research results. Because of their particular nature, qualitative studies are especially susceptible to researcher's failure to adhere to the codes of ethics and republication of research results in different papers, a phenomenon named salami publication (1, 2) or data salami slicing (3). Even though salami publication is acceptable for certain quantitative studies (1, 4), it is repeatedly occurring in the qualitative field, too.

Today, many published qualitative studies with a content analysis approach have been derived from other qualitative research, including mixed-method, phenomenology, or grounded theory studies. This not only is unethical but also impoverishes the richness of qualitative research (2, 5). In such studies, since the research objective and consequently, the research question is different from the ones in the original study, the authors obviously cannot reach another concept on the lines of the main concept by presenting a few subcategories and publishing thinly sliced papers. Accordingly, a few statements by the participants in an interview in a qualitative study cannot lead to in-depth insights into key concepts, which should be derived from participants' rich experiences. This can explain the repetition of scales in qualitative studies in recent years or the republication of the same findings under a different name in a different journal. Even though the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has reacted to this issue and regards it as contrary to codes of ethics in research (6), inadequate attention to the quality of studies, educational institutions' pressuring PhD students and professors to publish more papers in short periods and occasionally, the unawareness or work overload of editorial

teams at journals promote salami publication (3).

Unless salami publication, especially concerning qualitative research, is dealt with, it will not only continue to threaten the quality of academic studies like a chronic disease, but also waste editors', reviewers', and readers' time. It appears that educational institutions worldwide should make a unified effort to pay closer attention to the quality of studies and observe academic principles in the publication and release of data from qualitative studies. Among the measures that can be taken to prevent salami publication are revising the scoring system for papers and the impact factors of journals (which influence professors' promotions and students' permission to defend their theses) and reviewers' and editors' scrutinizing papers submitted for publication and employment of screening software to access papers and their authors to ensure the non-repetition of research results (3, 7). Moreover, it is recommended that, in the case of papers extracted from qualitative studies and especially PhD theses, the authors present the exact title of the dissertation from which the paper is derived in the acknowledgment section. This can help prevent academic dishonesty if the main phenomenon under study in a thesis does not agree with the title of the paper extracted from it.

### Footnotes

**Authors' Contribution:** Study concept and design: CT and FV. Interpretation of data: CT and FV. Drafting of the manuscript: CT and FV. Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: CT and FV.

**Conflict of Interests:** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Funding/Support:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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