



Leadership Discussion Guide: Issues Journals Face

You are a board member of a prestigious journal. A manuscript submission comes to you that has a very small sample size, and you send back to the authors suggesting that they need more statistical power. The authors resubmit the paper after only a few weeks with a significantly larger sample, and exactly the same descriptive results (Mean and Standard Error). Statistically, this is impossible given the dramatic increase in sample size. What do you do?

Decision Making Framework:

- 1) List the issues raised by the 2MC.
- 2) What rules or regulations apply to the situation?
- 3) What questions will help you open up the problem?
- 4) What resources could you use or consult to help you make a decision?
- 5) What are your options and how does each option affect others involved in the situation?
- 6) What would you do after considering all of these and in light of your own values?

Issues

Fabricating data
Potential problems with data keeping
What do you really know? Whistleblowing:
Should you tell?

Resources

Campus and federal regulations
Research integrity officer on campus
Mentor
Colleagues
National ethics center website

Rules and Regulations

Federal research integrity regulations
University's regulations

Options

Report the researcher
Wait and see
Talk to the research integrity officer on your campus
Talk to the visiting researcher in question
Talk to adviser or other trusted mentor



Questions

Had the researcher done anything? What? With what results?

Do you know without a doubt that the data was fabricated?

The the mean, and standard error were the same in both papers what would you do?

If you rejected it and the researcher was outraged and sued you how would you handle that?

If you reject it and another journal publishes it what would you do?

How sever should your action be?

Is there any possibility that you could retreat to your Ph.D. lab to regroup?

Takeaway Lessons:

1) Information Gathering

You know what appears to have happened, however, you would need more information before going forward

2) Seeking Resources

You may need advice before you take the next step. Are you on close enough terms with your Ph.D. advisor or any member of your committee to seek confidential advice from one person? Does your new camps have an ombudsperson who might be able to provide confidential advice?

3) Asking Questions

Once you have gathered the facts so you have a fuller sense of the situation, One option is to talk with the PhD student based on what you have learned. Be clear on what you are wanting and focus on salvaging the relationship. You should rehearse these questions so you can ask them in a low-key, professional affect, without making charges.

4) Follow the Rules for Having a Dispute Professionally

Before you have your conversation with the visiting faculty member you should read and absorb the rules for having a dispute professionally.

Next Steps:

You have two main options: don't publish the paper and report the authors or don't publish the paper and let the authors be. You could report what you have found and your possible hunches to the other journals however if you do not have any documentation backing up your claims then you will face scrutiny. You could end up getting sued so replication or asking for the data might be the best course of action if documentation is low.

What Really Happened:

The board decided to not publish the paper. The authors were furious and they decided to publish with a different journal. Sine the board did not keep the first copy of the paper there was not enough documentation to show that the paper the authors submitted to the other journals had flaws with the data.

