

Editorial on Coercive Citations, Imaginary Authors and Citation Padding

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On January 2, 2018 coercive citations, imaginary authors and citation padding were brought to my attention with a Happy new year letter by Nature Briefing [1] citing the PLoS ONE paper [2] where padded citations are described as rampant in academia quoting a survey of more than 12,000 researchers, one in five reporting that editors tried to coerce them into adding citations to their papers to increase journals impact factor. This study also found that more than a third of respondents felt obliged to add authors who didn't contribute anything, curiously with women 38% more likely to have done so than men. Nature with this action unwillingly confirms the validity of a recent thesis [3] that scientists competing individually for career progression and grant awards science-technology should be ranked by the number and the total impact factor of their SCI publications strictly as first authors falling into their 10 out of 10 deciles, regardless their number of citations and H index frequently accumulated in manuscripts with only apparently high impact factor since cosigned by a cohort of anonymous authors without history, part and art, as numerous as the one denounced by PLoS ONE [2] and Nature Briefing [1]. This proposal justified in details in reference 3, contrary to some gloomy opinions, appears capable to effectively and objectively assess institutions, individual university professors and researchers, and should be used to provide computer-assisted evaluation criteria for either maintaining or upgrading the given position, maintaining or closing public institutions, and filtering grant applications. This new excellence, computing the number of coauthors and the position in each of the quoted papers, will then emerge worldwide strictly on the merit and far from the interest and lobbying power of leading publishing groups and corrupted academia. Such evaluation would enhance technology acquisition and creative scientific thinker's promotion worldwide, which is the object of this communication and of this journal. In Nanotechnology-Biophysics-Biochemistry-Biotechnology taken as reference in [3] only 379 International Journals are present in the SCISEARCH database with Impact Factor in excess of 4.2 to be defined as equally excellent in the given scientific and technological sector, regardless the level of impact factor achieved associating artificially a large number of authors frequently in excess of 20 in highly popular and well diffuse journal similarly proliferating in all parts of society to include part of the community extraneous to science and technology, as nurses, undergraduate students, bureaucrats, managers and patients.

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