

## EDITORIAL

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### Scientific Editor

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### Advertising

revista@aborj.org.br

Phone: +55-21-2504-0002 Ext.: 220

### Graphic Designer

Valéria Pontes

### Online Editorial Production

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### General Composing and Administration

ABO-RJ Headquarters - R. Barão de Sertório, 75

Rio Comprido - Rio de Janeiro - RJ - Brazil

CEP: 20.261-050 - Phone: +55-21-2504-0002

(Ext.: 220) Fax: +55-21-2504-3859

Website: www.aborj.org.br

**RBO online:** www.revista.aborj.org.br

**E-mail:** scientific@revista.aborj.org.br

## Moral Bullying/Harassment in Scientific Publishing

Several studies show that moral harassment has increased at multiple organizational levels as scientific publishing becomes more of a product in Brazil.

This process is part of a scenario of devaluation of the figure of scientific editors, who are criticized for their legal exercise and functional activities, a situation exacerbated by a victimized stance taken by the authors when their manuscripts receive negative reviews. The relationship between co-authors and editors is then susceptible to moral harassment practices.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this editorial is to signal why moral harassment occurs in the environment surrounding the relationship of the chief editors of emerging scientific journals versus co-authors of renowned scientific publications or managers of large research projects and teaching institutions; we also seek to provide answers for what can be done to avoid such behavior.

As an editor still in the process of certification and seeking to constitute and consolidate the ethics of good publication practices constantly disseminated by highly indexed scientific journals, I frequently come across indelicate attacks from corresponding authors when their manuscript receives, at that moment, the indication of rejection for publication in the journal they opted to submit their manuscript.

### Moral Harassment/Bullying In Scientific Publication



**Figure 1.** Charge representative of the relationship between predatory authors versus editors of emerging journals, supported by peer reviewers in combating bullying from predatory authors.

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## EDITORIAL

My question is whether this occurs with other editors of emerging scientific journals or of journals undergoing restructuring processes, which also follow the light of science as a reference to the peer-review process and the fight against manuscripts of high similarity. Emerging journals are going through a great struggle to establish indexations and to comply, in an ethical way, with the transparency of the publication flow and to abolish any kind of lack of ethics.

Another interface opens when editors are questioned about the merit of the articles published in their journals and a disparaging statement is made that the quality of what is published by the journal is of low quality when an author fails to accept a negative response. This is a daily practice coming mainly from great researchers who feel the light of knowledge mostly exempt from peer reviews and that their very name represents an exponent or maximum criterion for indexation and metrics that the emerging journal can achieve in the future.

Moral harassment is not new, in fact, such perverse action is historically present in Brazil, as in the period of slavery, for example. What is relatively new is a search for discussion, punishment, criminalization,<sup>2</sup> understanding of the triggering event, remedial actions and, especially, others to prevent or avoid harassment, in addition to extensive simultaneous coverage in academic, journalistic, organizational, union, political, medical and legal circles.<sup>2,3</sup>

We understand, agree and assume, as described by Freitas, 2007 that moral harassment is abusive, intentional, frequent and repeated conduct aimed at diminishing, humiliating, vexing, embarrassing, disqualifying and psychically demolishing an individual or group, degrading their working conditions, affecting their dignity and compromising their personal and professional integrity.<sup>4</sup>

We propose to broaden the view about moral harassment in the author-editor relationship to disseminate the scientific production of good practices and educate these interrelationships with total demerit for science, thus promoting the advancement of debate and the raising of relevant issues.



**Geraldo Oliveira Silva-Junior (DDS;  
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