

Network at Hainan University Suspected to Manipulate the Peer Review Process

Recently, the 5GH Team uncovered a network at Hainan University and other Chinese universities suspected of manipulating the peer review process.

DOI	Editor	Reviewer	Issue
10.1371/journal.pone.0290866	Atif Jahanger	*** Mohammad Razib Hossain	Reviewer 1 (Round 1): formulaic review report
10.1371/journal.pone.0287970	Atif Jahanger	YU Yang *** ***	2 references to YU Y 4 references to Jahanger A Reviewer 1 (YU Yang) (Round 1) recommend 4 articles, and formulaic review report Reviewer 2 (Round 1): poor review report
10.1371/journal.pone.0283731	Atif Jahanger	Faisal Abbas *** ***	Review 1 (Round 1): formulaic review report Reviewer 2 (Round 1): poor review report Review 3 (Round 1) formulaic review report
10.1371/journal.pone.0289166	Atif Jahanger		4 references to Jahanger A
10.1371/journal.pone.0284452	Atif Jahanger		1 references to Jahanger A
10.1371/journal.pone.0283697	Atif Jahanger	*** Ashar Awan	Reviewer 2 (Round 1) formulaic review report
10.1371/journal.pone.0282675	Atif Jahanger		2 references to YU Y
10.1371/journal.pone.0277651	Atif Jahanger		
10.1371/journal.pone.0279493	Atif Jahanger	*** YU Yang ***	Reviewer 2 (YU Yang) (Round 1): formulaic review report, recommend 6 articles, 3 of them were coauthored by YU Reviewer 3 recommend 3 articles with no common author
10.1371/journal.pone.0277569	Atif Jahanger		
10.1371/journal.pone.0277245	Atif Jahanger	TIAN Xiaoli *** YU Yang ***	Reviewer 1 (Round 1): recommend tow articles coauthored by TIAN Xiaoli Reviewer 2 (Round 1) and Reviewer 3 (Round 1) (Yang Yu): formulaic review report
10.3389/fenvs.2022.962627	Atif Jahanger	YE Penghao YU Yang Ashar Awan Muhammad Zubair Chishti	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.996341	Atif Jahanger	Muhammad Arif Amin Nabila	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.1012007	Atif Jahanger	Muhammad Usman Joshua Chukwuma Onwe	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.991022	Atif Jahanger	Muhammad Saeed Meo Usman Mehmood	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.937834	Atif Jahanger	Hafiz Syed Mohsin Abbas Muhammad Ahsan Ali Raza Saba Khan	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.994062	Atif Jahanger	Muhammad Usman Ashar Awan	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.967470	Atif Jahanger	Muhammad Usman YU Yang Ashar Awan	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.1007231	Atif Jahanger	YE Penghao Joshua Chukwuma Onwe	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.969726	Atif Jahanger	YE Penghao YU Yang Ashar Awan	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.984612	Atif Jahanger	YE Penghao Muhammad Usman YU Yang	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.945091	Atif Jahanger	Noor Dln Roni Bhowmik Aqib Mujtaba	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.985384	Atif Jahanger	YU Yang Waseem Khan Maxwell Chukwudi Udeagha	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.949007	Atif Jahanger	Emran Hossain Soumen Rej	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.998915	Atif Jahanger	Muhammad Usman Joshua Chukwuma Onwe MIN Wang XU Wenyun	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.1020502	Atif Jahanger	YE Penghao Ashar Awan	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.1012229	Atif Jahanger	Joshua Chukwuma Onwe XU Wenyun	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.953035	Atif Jahanger	YE Penghao YANG Bo Emran Hossain Malayaranjan Sahoo Chandrashekar Raghutla	
10.3389/fenvs.2022.994180	Atif Jahanger	YE Penghao Muhammad Usman	

Atif Jahanger from Hainan University was an active editor in 2022. He processed 29 articles across PLoS (11) and Frontiers (18). Of these articles, 24 disclosed the names of the reviewers, although some of the reviewers required to be anonymous (marked with " *** " at the table). A total of 66 reviewer records were successfully compiled, from which 30 distinct reviewers were identified.

YU Yang (杨雨) and YE Penghao (叶鹏昊) from Hainan University, the same institution with which Atif Jahanger is affiliated to, have 8 and 7 records, respectively, ranking the 1st and 2nd among the identified reviewers, followed by Ashar Awan (6), Muhammad Usman (6), and Joshua Chukwuma Onwe (4). Other reviewers were invited fewer than twice by Atif Jahanger. These patterns suggest that Atif Jahanger relied heavily on a handful reviewers, particularly YU and YE from his own institution.

Reviewer	Count	Institution
YU Yang (杨雨)	8	Hainan University
YE Penghao (叶鹏昊)	7	Hainan University
Ashar Awan	6	Nisantasi University, Türkiye
Muhammad Usman	6	Wuhan University
Joshua Chukwuma Onwe	4	
Emran Hossain	2	
XU Wenyun	2	
Amin Nabila	1	
Aqib Mujtaba	1	
Chandrashekar Raghutla	1	
Faisal Abbas	1	
Hafiz Syed Mohsin Abbas	1	
MIN Wang	1	
Malayaranjan Sahoo	1	
Maxwell Chukwudi Udeagha	1	
Mohammad Razib Hossain	1	
Muhammad Ahsan Ali Raza	1	
Muhammad Arif	1	
Muhammad Saeed Meo	1	
Muhammad Zubair Chishti	1	
Noor Din	1	
Roni Bhowmik	1	
Saba Khan	1	
Soumen Rej	1	
TIAN Xiaoli	1	
Usman Mehmood	1	
Waseem Khan	1	
YANG Bo	1	

The 5GH Team notes that the three review reports YU submitted to PLoS ONE are all problematic. They are formulaic and lack any specific details pertaining to the manuscripts under review. In her review report for the article [1], YU recommended 4 references to the authors, all of those recommended references were co-authored by YU. In a separate review report for the article [2], YU recommended 6 references to the authors, 3 of those recommended references were co-authored by YU, too.

While details of the review reports for Frontiers journals remain undisclosed, the patterns observed in the PLoS ONE review reports indicate that improper editorial and peer review practices are widespread within this network.

The Team holds that Atif Jahanger and his network exploited such improper editorial and peer review procedures for personal gain, rather than deliberately permitting low-quality manuscripts to successfully complete peer review. Notwithstanding, these unethical practices have triggered significant concerns over the integrity of the published articles. The Team urges the relevant

publishers to conduct a thorough re-evaluation of these works.

Last year, the 5GH Team and another research team independently uncovered a problematic editorial network within the scientific community. Although the affected publishers have committed to strengthening oversight of the peer review process, the identities of individuals in this network have not been disclosed, and none of the editors engaged in questionable editorial practices have been sanctioned. This poses a significant risk to the scientific publishing industry. The Team maintains that exposing this network to the scientific community will assist publishers in implementing effective measures to oversee the peer review process.

[1] [10.1371/journal.pone.0287970](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0287970)

[2] [10.1371/journal.pone.0279493](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0279493)

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