

Ethics in publication: salami slicing

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Salami papers are defined as those created by slicing research in as many parts as possible, looking for the minimal publishable unit.⁽¹⁾ This type of conduct aims to publish more papers using the same research. Another trick of getting more publications and citations is by implementing a clearly unethical practice of duplicate submissions.⁽²⁾ Both are culpable of falsely inflating the citation index of authors, data dredging, cherry picking of data and worse, leading to systematic errors in meta-analysis.⁽²⁾ Journal reviewers and readers often cannot evaluate the “salami paper” data in the whole context of the research. It’s admissible to make more than one publication using the same database when clearly justified for addressing different questions and minimal overlap of focus.⁽³⁾ In these cases this must be explicitly presented in the manuscript.

Salami papers are easily recognized if the reader sees at least two slices: the same population and similar parameters evaluated, separated in different papers. Salami slicers are aware of this risk (most editors, including those of this journal do not publish salami papers if perceived as one). One approach to avoid detection is to try and publish in different journals – some try this. Some game the system in even more clever ways by sending their papers to different journals at the same time, as unpublished papers can’t be known to the editors or reviewers. Other more bold authors send the sliced manuscripts to the same journal and hope for the best. In addition, salami papers commonly contain significant auto plagiarism.

This journal intends not to publish salami papers: we consider salami slicing an ethical nonconformity to Science. We probably have published some, unrecognized at the time of acceptance. In the long run slicing your research to have more papers published will not add to your reputation. Yes, we know that in some places, researchers pay is related to the number of papers published. Yes, we know the dicta: publish or perish, or publish or be damned. We do not consider these conditions as excuses to slicing your research. We understand the problems with Scientometrics and paper inflation⁽⁴⁾ but those facts again do not excuse salami slicing of manuscripts.

As Goff Normal states⁽⁵⁾ data dredging, salami slicing and other strategies to ensure your rejection: tips on how to not get your paper published refer not only to the salami paper but to future papers by the authors.

Salami papers will be discovered to be slices of the same research, sooner or later. Usually sooner. If one practices this approach, they are in great danger of damaging their reputation. Thus, please reconsider this misguided approach to increasing the number of publications.

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