Ethics Seminar I:
Roles of the Researcher in Manuscript Reviewing

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The Scenario

1. As a reviewer you get access to an interesting paper
2. Thinking that the paper will get accepted, you give the paper to a MSc student to work with
3. The paper is actually rejected
4. Solutions:
   a. Stop the research
   b. Continue the research
   c. Ask the authors
      i. if they say yes, just publish
      ii. if they say no, goto (4)

suggested solution: 4a - stop the research
Ethical Problems and Conflicts in the Decision

Inside the research group:

● The MSc student might not be able to complete their work in time.
  ○ As supervisors, we have a responsibility to our students

Outside of the research group:

● Valuable work might need to be discarded
  ○ We have a responsibility for sharing important research with the community
Alternative Solutions

- Asking the authors for permission before making a decision
  - Only possible if the authors are known
  - What happens if they refuse?
- Going ahead with the work
  - Can also be an options after asking the authors and they refuse
Who is Affected by the Solution?

- Ourselves
- The original authors
- The MSc student
- Depending on the potential impact of the work, the research community or even society as a whole might be affected
Values Involved in Making a Decision

If the work is stopped:

● Not stealing other people’s work
● Giving credit to the people that deserve it

For the alternatives:

● Fairness to the MSc student
● Fairness to the research community
● Fairness to the original authors
Effects of the Solution to these Values

Stopping the research:

- Unfair to the master student, no credit for their work
- Fair to the original authors, credit is given where it should be
- Useful knowledge is lost

Not stopping has the opposite effects:

- Fair to the student
- Not fair to the authors
- Might affect your reputation in the community
Maximizing Ethical Correctness

- Making sure to find other work for the MSc student to minimize the extra work required.
- Trying to contact the authors and figure out a solution.
- Keep being informed on how the research goes and potentially revisit the project after the research has been published.
Alternatives & Related Questions

- If you continue with the work and you discover related results, should you inform the original authors?
- Was it ethical to use the work to begin with?
- Should you contact the authors before making a decision, asking them for permission?
  - Should you include them as coauthors?
  - What if they refuse to give you permission?
  - Should an anonymous reviewer expose his identity to the authors?
  - Can this damage your reputation in the field?
Conclusion

- The outcome depends on which values are more important
- There is no 100% correct choice
- What do you think?
The End

Thank you!