



Editorial resilience in Pakistan's biomedical journals: challenges and conflicts

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Being an editor today extends far beyond correcting grammar, formatting references, or deciding which manuscript to publish. It requires resilience in the face of persistent external and internal pressures. In academic publishing, particularly within biomedical journals in Pakistan, editors encounter distinctive challenges. They must address the expectations imposed by regulatory bodies such as the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC). At the same time, they are required to manage divergent views among senior editorial members and mentor junior team members who may lack commitment or avoid responsibility through internal dynamics. The true test of editorial resilience lies in balancing these pressures while safeguarding journal integrity and maintaining professional dignity.

Editors are frequently subjected to regulatory pressures from bodies like HEC and PM&DC. While these institutions play a crucial role in enhancing research quality and promoting ethical publication standards, frequent policy revisions and stringent compliance requirements can generate considerable stress for editorial teams. Editors may receive sudden directives related to journal indexing, publication frequency, or peer-review structures that are difficult to implement within constrained resources. In such circumstances, adaptability and transparent communication are essential. Rather than perceiving regulatory requirements as burdens, editors may approach them as opportunities for gradual process improvement.¹ Open communication with regulatory authorities, timely clarification of expectations, and meticulous documentation of compliance efforts can significantly reduce avoidable stress. Internal pressures within the editorial

office can be equally demanding. Senior editorial members often hold strong opinions and, at times, conflicting visions for the journal's direction. Editors must therefore assume the role of mediator, respectfully acknowledge the diverse perspectives while ensuring that the journal's core objectives are not overshadowed by personal disagreements. Resistance may arise, particularly when introducing stricter peer-review systems or adopting modern editorial workflows. In such situations, patience, respectful dialogue, and evidence-based persuasion are vital. Recognizing the experience of senior colleagues while highlighting evolving professional standards, supported by examples from well-established journals, can help build consensus.²

Challenges intensify when dealing with junior editorial members who avoid responsibilities or engage in subtle workplace politics. This aspect of editorial leadership is particularly draining, as it blends professional obligations with interpersonal dynamics. Delayed submissions, misplaced accountability, and attempts to gain favor through alignment or negativity can undermine team cohesion. Editors must respond with calmness, consistency, and impartiality. Clear written task assignments, defined timelines, and transparent expectations promote accountability. Regular meetings serve not only to monitor progress but also to acknowledge genuine effort, which strengthens morale and discourages unhealthy competition. Persistent avoidance of responsibility, however, must be addressed privately and constructively, focusing on behavior rather than personal traits.³

Maintaining professionalism amid these challenges requires emotional intelligence and self-discipline. Editorial stress is real, and when inadequately

managed, it can lead to burnout, frustration, and strained professional relationships.⁴ Editors should therefore cultivate healthy coping strategies, including delegation, periodic breaks, and clear boundaries between professional and personal life. Equally important is nurturing a supportive editorial culture. Simple practices such as acknowledging contributions, offering assistance during peak workload periods, and facilitating open discussions can foster trust and collective responsibility.

Self-reflection is another cornerstone of editorial resilience. Editors must continuously evaluate the environment they create whether it encourages collaboration or fear, transparency or ambiguity. The humility to acknowledge mistakes and the courage to rectify them set a powerful example for the entire team.⁴ Such leadership ultimately cultivates a sustainable and ethical editorial culture in which roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and respected.

In conclusion, editorial resilience is not about ignoring challenges or minimizing difficulties. Rather, it involves confronting pressures with balance, integrity, and composure. Whether managing regulatory demands, mediating internal conflicts, or guiding less motivated team members, an editor's strength lies in patience, empathy, and clarity of purpose. A resilient editor not only withstands stress but transforms it into an opportunity for continuous improvement.

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