Qeios

Peer Review

Review of: "The Consequences of Peer Review Bias for Academic Careers and the Progress of Science"

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This is an interesting paper that gives some useful stylised results about a topic that will be relevant to all academics and has broader policy implications.

The paper is quite well written and easy to read. It also uses a good range of appropriate references.

I have a few comments that hopefully will be helpful:

In the first paragraph of P2, it would be more balanced to discuss some of the advantages and rationales for peer review, such as ensuring that articles are legitimate, improving articles, etc. Drozdz and Ladomery (2024), which is cited in the paper, have a whole section on this.

Double-blind reviewing is normal for many journals, so, in theory, review bias as described in the paper should not occur. In practice, reviewers can often deduce the identity of authors, and, of course, editors can still be biased. Editors can desk-reject papers and also bias the process of selecting reviewers, for example, by selecting reviewers likely to be favourable or unfavourable to a paper. I think the model would still be appropriate for editorial bias, but this issue should be discussed.

I was quite surprised to see q, the probability of a paper from an elite institution being accepted, set as high as 0.9. This is probably quite subject-specific, but in my area, the probability of a good journal accepting a paper would be more like 0.1. Consequently, it would be interesting to see how sensitive your results are to this parameter.

I think some of the notation could be clearer. It would be better if the equations were numbered. Also, all the terms in the equations should be defined very clearly. I found it confusing that K_s, K_1, K_2, and K_3 were used without all being clearly defined in one place. I think it would be clearer to define these after the equations in which they are used.

doi.org/10.32388/ZR6QDP

I think the Figures could also be clearer. The graphs in Figures 2 and 3, especially, could be labelled more clearly.

The magnitude of the bias is quite interesting. It would be interesting to discuss how large this potentially might be and how its magnitude would affect the results. Would it be possible to get any idea of the size of the bias from real data?

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.