



**Journal Policy
for
the Journal of Equity in Sciences and
Sustainable Development (JESSD)**

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Preamble

The Journal of Equity in Science and Sustainable Development (JESSD) is keen to advancing scholarly dialogue and knowledge that foster inclusiveness, equity, and sustainability across disciplines. Guided by principles of integrity, fairness, and academic excellence, it serves as a trusted journal platform for disseminating original research, reviews, research notes, short communication, and policy briefing that address global and local challenges in science, technology, and sustainable development. This journal policy document sets forth the standards and responsibilities governing the journal's operations, including editorial processes, peer review, ethical practices, open access, and copy right, ensuring that contributions are evaluated transparently, fairly, and with respect for diverse perspectives. By adhering to international publishing ethics and best practices, JESSD enhances the visibility of scholarly works by engaging the global academic community, reaffirming its commitment to knowledge sharing, equitable access, and the archiving and indexing of scholarly works.

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1. General Information

The *Journal of Equity in Sciences and Sustainable Development (JESSD)*, eISSN: 2523-1901, is an international, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to advancing interdisciplinary knowledge at the intersection of science, equity, and sustainable development. The journal provides a platform for critical debates, innovative research, and policy dialogue that promote fairness, inclusivity, and resilience in addressing local, regional, and global development challenges.

JESSD is owned and published by Madda Walabu University. The journal publishes original papers that have not been previously published including original research articles, theoretical and conceptual papers, review articles, case studies, short policy briefing, and research notes that critically engage with the theories, practices, and policy implications of sustainable development across multiple sectors. The journal particularly values contributions that bridge the gap between scientific evidence and policy/practice, with a focus on equity, justice, and inclusive innovation.

JESSD is an open access, does not charge any fees to authors for publication or to readers for accessing content, ensuring equitable dissemination of knowledge. Contributions are submitted in English and the journal welcomes submissions from researchers worldwide, regardless of gender, career stage, or ethnic and religious affiliation. The journal is issued biannually, in January and June, and is indexed in **Google Scholar**, **AJOL**, **EBSCO**, **EJOL**, and **Copernicus**, providing broad visibility and academic reach. Digital copies of all articles are permanently archived in the Madda Walabu University Institutional Repository and OJS open-access repository. In addition, JESSD participates in LOCKSS and CLOCKSS digital preservation systems, and each article is assigned a DOI, ensuring long-term accessibility, discoverability, and citation integrity.

2. Editorial Policy

2.1 Editorial Bodies

JESSD is governed by a structured editorial team committed to upholding the journal's mission of advancing research in equity, sustainability, and scientific innovation. The editorial bodies, appointed by the management team of Madda Walabu University, include the Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editors (Section Editors), Technical Editors, who collectively form the Editorial Board, and the National and International Advisory Board.

The Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editors serve three-year terms, with the possibility of renewal for a second term. The Editor-in-Chief, acting on behalf of the Editorial Board member and in consultation with the journal editors, appoints Technical Editors. The appointment of new Technical Editor positions requires approval from both the JESSD Editorial Board and the University Management Team. Members of the National and International Advisory Board serve five-year terms, while members of the Editorial Board serve three-year terms, with the possibility of renewal for a second term.

2.2 Editorial Independence and Responsibilities

Editorial operations related to content and peer review are independent and free from the influence of the institution that support the journal. The Editor-in-Chief, in consultation with Associate Editors and the Editorial Board, is responsible for deciding which submitted articles will be published, guided by the Editorial Policy and legal requirements regarding libel, copyright infringement, and plagiarism. Commercial, political, or personal influences are not permitted to interfere with editorial decisions. Editors ensure a fair, unbiased peer-review process, maintain confidentiality of submissions, and handle conflicts of interest transparently.

2.2.1 Editor-in-Chief

The Editor-in-Chief holds overall responsibility for the editorial direction, integrity, and operations of JESSD. Appointed by the management team of Madda Walabu University for a three-year term, renewal for a second term, the Editor-in-Chief serves by virtue of

their role on the JESSD Editorial Board and chairs the JESSD Editorial Policy Committee. His responsibilities include:

- **Strategic Oversight:** Define and maintain the journal's editorial vision, ensuring alignment with JESSD's mission to foster inclusive and sustainable development through interdisciplinary research.
- **Publication Decisions:** Make final decisions on manuscript publication, in consultation with Associate Editors, Technical Editors, and the Editorial Board, guided by the journal's Editorial Policy and legal requirements regarding libel, copyright infringement, and plagiarism.
- **Editorial Appointments:** Recommend the appointment and reappointment of Associate Editors and other editorial roles to the JESSD Editorial Board Chair. Appoint Technical Editors, in consultation with journal editors, to positions approved by the JESSD Editorial Board and University Management Team.
- **Policy Development:** Lead the JESSD Editorial Policy Committee to develop and update editorial policies, ensuring compliance with international standards, such as those from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).
- **Appeals and Conflict Resolution:** Handle appeals of manuscript decisions unresolved by Associate Editors, with their decision being final. Address ethical concerns or misconduct allegations, consulting with the Editorial Board and following COPE guidelines.
- **Representation:** Represent JESSD in academic and professional settings, promoting the journal's mission and enhancing its visibility and reputation.

2.2.2 Associate Editors (Section Editors)

Associate Editors oversee specific thematic or disciplinary sections of JESSD. Appointed by the management team of Madda Walabu University for a three-year term, renewal for a second term, they serve as members of the Editorial Board. Their responsibilities include:

- **Manuscript Management:** Manage the peer review process for manuscripts within their section, assigning reviewers, evaluating reviewer feedback, and recommending publication decisions to the Editor-in-Chief.

- **Reviewer Selection:** Select qualified reviewers with expertise in the manuscript's subject area, ensuring they are not from the authors' institutions or have recent collaborations with authors, in line with JESSD's double-blind peer review process.
- **Quality Control:** Ensure manuscripts align with JESSD's scope, standards of scientific rigor, and ethical guidelines, providing feedback to authors to improve submissions.
- **Initial Appeals:** Handle initial author appeals regarding manuscript decisions, escalating unresolved cases to the Editor-in-Chief.
- **Collaboration:** Work closely with the Editor-in-Chief and Technical Editors to ensure consistency in editorial processes and adherence to JESSD's policies.

2.2.3 Technical Editors

Technical Editors support the editorial process by focusing on the technical and formal aspects of manuscripts. Appointed by the Editor-in-Chief, on behalf of the Editorial Board Chair and in consultation with journal editors, to positions created by the JESSD Editorial Board and approved by the University Management Team, they serve three-year terms as members of the Editorial Board. Their responsibilities include:

- **Manuscript Formatting:** Review manuscripts for adherence to JESSD's formatting, style, and submission guidelines, ensuring clarity, consistency, and compliance with publication standards.
- **Technical Accuracy:** Verify the technical accuracy of figures, tables, data presentations, and references, ensuring they meet the journal's standards for reproducibility and clarity.
- **Plagiarism and Ethical Checks:** Assist in screening manuscripts for plagiarism using Turnitin and flag potential ethical issues, such as undisclosed conflicts of interest or improper citations, to the Associate Editors or Editor-in-Chief.
- **Peer Review Support:** Coordinate with Associate Editors to ensure reviewers receive properly formatted manuscripts and provide technical feedback to authors based on reviewer comments.

- **Data and Code Verification:** Review Data Availability Statements, Code Availability Statements, and shared research data or protocols to ensure compliance with JESSD’s open data policies and FAIR principles.

2.2.4 Editorial Board Members

Editorial Board members, including the Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editors, and Technical Editors, are approved by the management team of Madda Walabu University for three-year terms. They collectively ensure the journal’s editorial integrity and alignment with its mission. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- **Policy Guidance:** in consultation with the Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Board Chair, they are working on developing editorial policies, strategic initiatives, and journal development, such as expanding indexing or abstracting, thereby enhancing journal reputability.
- **Manuscript Evaluation:** Participate in manuscript evaluation when consulted by the Editor-in-Chief or Associate Editors, particularly for complex or contentious submissions.
- **Ethical Oversight:** Support investigations into ethical concerns or misconduct, providing expertise and ensuring adherence to COPE guidelines.
- **Journal Promotion:** Promote JESSD within academic and professional communities, encouraging high-quality submissions and increasing the journal’s visibility.

2.2.5 National and International Advisory Board Members

The National and International Advisory Board provides strategic and expert guidance to JESSD, appointed by the Editor-in-Chief in consultation with the Editorial Board for five-year terms. Their responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- **Journal Strategic Advice:** Provide high-level guidance on JESSD’s long-term goals, including expanding its global reach, enhancing its reputation, and aligning with international standards in equity and sustainable development research.

- **Expert Consultation and Training:** Offer specialized expertise in areas relevant to JESSD's scope, advising on emerging trends, interdisciplinary approaches, and global challenges in equity and sustainability.
- **Quality Assurance:** Review and advise on editorial policies, peer review processes, and journal indexing to maintain high academic standards.
- **Journal Networking and Advocacy:** Promote JESSD in national and international academic networks, fostering collaborations and encouraging submissions from diverse global researchers.
- **Ethical Guidance and advice:** Provide guidance and advice, in case of complex ethical issues or misconduct cases when consulted by the Editor-in-Chief or Editorial Board.

2.3 Authors' Responsibilities

Authors must ensure originality of their submissions and confirm that the manuscript has not been published elsewhere or is under consideration by another journal. The authors shall follow the journal's manuscript writing guideline and proper citations and references must be included to avoid plagiarism. JESSD recognizes authorship only those who made significant contributions. All studies involving humans, animals, or sensitive data require ethical clearance. Funding sources and conflicts of interest must be disclosed. Authors are encouraged to use inclusive, non-discriminatory language. Furthermore, authors are responsible for ensuring that submissions comply with ethical standards, contain no unfounded or unlawful statements, and do not infringe upon the rights of third parties. JESSD and its publisher assume no legal responsibility for claims arising from submitted content.

2.4 Reviewers' Responsibilities

In JESSD, reviewers are expected to provide timely, high quality, and unbiased review report on the scholarly merit and scientific quality of submitted manuscripts. Based on the reviewer guideline, they evaluate the manuscript's alignment with the journal's scope, the relevance and rigor of the research methods, the originality and significance of the findings, and the clarity of presentation. Reviewers must alert the Editor to any ethical concerns,

including plagiarism, fabrication, or parallel submissions, and identify relevant published works that have not been cited.

Reviewers must declare any conflicts of interest and recuse themselves if necessary. They are responsible for conducting objective reviews, avoiding personal criticism of authors, and supporting their assessments with clear arguments. Manuscripts are to be treated as confidential documents, and unpublished material or ideas must not be used for personal gain without the authors' written consent. If reviewers feel unqualified to assess a manuscript or cannot provide a timely review, they must notify the Editor immediately.

3. Peer Review Policy

JESSD follows a rigorous double-blind peer review policy, ensuring that all information identifying authors is concealed from reviewers, and vice versa. Authors are required to submit two separate files: (1) a title page containing author details, affiliations, acknowledgments, declarations, and complete contact information for the corresponding author, and (2) an anonymized manuscript without any author identifiers.

Upon submission, all manuscripts undergo an initial desk review by the Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editor-in-Chief, or Section Editors with relevant expertise within five days to assess suitability for the journal. Manuscripts deemed unsuitable or unlikely to pass peer review may be rejected at this stage. Suitable manuscripts are typically sent to at least two independent expert reviewers, who act independently and are not aware of each other's identities. Reviewers are selected based on their expertise in the subject area, must not be from the authors' institutions, and should have no recent joint publications with the authors. If there are significant discrepancies between reviewer recommendations, a third reviewer may be consulted.

During the review process, editors may request additional information, including raw data, if necessary for evaluating the scholarly merit of the manuscript. All such materials are treated as confidential and must not be used for personal gain. Reviewers are expected to provide objective, high-quality feedback on the scientific rigor, relevance, and clarity of

the manuscript. If any review is convincingly questioned by authors, additional reviewers may be assigned to ensure fairness and quality.

Members of the editorial board members or guest editors are allowed to submit their own papers; in such cases, they are removed from all editorial duties for that manuscript, and another editor oversees the peer-review process. Authors receive anonymized reviewer comment and may be asked to revise their manuscript, providing point-by-point responses to reviewers' comments. The final decision on acceptance or rejection rests with the Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editor-in-Chief, or Section Editor. Authors may appeal editorial decisions, and the review process is generally completed within 6–8 weeks, ensuring timely and thorough peer review.

4. Publication Ethics

JESSD adheres strictly to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) of the publisher. Plagiarism, falsification, fabrication of data, redundant or duplicate publication, and any other form of research misconduct are strictly prohibited. All submitted manuscripts are screened using Turnitin plagiarism-detection software. Proven cases of misconduct will lead to rejection of the submission or retraction of a published article. When necessary, retractions, corrections, or expressions of concern will be issued to maintain the integrity of the scholarly record.

Ethical approval and informed consent are required for studies involving human participants, human material, sensitive data, or animals. Authors must include details of ethical clearance in their manuscripts. Use of AI-assisted writing tools (e.g., ChatGPT or similar large language models) is permitted for language editing and drafting support but must be acknowledged in the manuscript (e.g., in the Methods or Acknowledgments section). Such tools may not be listed as authors, and their outputs must not be cited as primary sources. Photography, videos, or illustrations created wholly or partly using generative AI are not acceptable, while non-generative tools for technical image enhancement should be disclosed.

Authors affirm that their manuscripts are prepared in line with the highest ethical standards, contain no unlawful or defamatory statements, and do not infringe upon the rights of third parties. The publisher assumes no legal responsibility for claims arising from submitted or published content.

5. Retraction Policy

JESSD is committed to maintaining the accuracy and integrity of the scholarly record. As mentioned in section 4, under publication ethics, articles may be retracted in cases of legal infringements, violation of ethical codes, or research misconduct, including plagiarism, data fabrication, duplicate submissions, ghost authorship, or undisclosed conflicts of interest. In addition, retractions may also occur when honest errors (e.g., flawed data, incorrect methods, faulty equipment) significantly undermine the findings.

For any retracted article, a Retraction Notice shall be published, clearly indicating the reason and the party initiating the retraction. The original article will remain accessible but marked with a “**Retracted**” watermark on each page. In the online version, the Retraction Notice will be directly linked to the original article, and vice versa. This ensures transparency while preserving the scholarly record. In cases, where corrections, rather than full retraction, are appropriate, an Erratum or Correction Notice will be issued.

6. Open Access and Licensing Policy

JESSD follows an **Open Access model**, in which authors are not charged any publication fees and readers do not pay subscription costs. All articles are made freely available online immediately upon publication, ensuring equitable access to knowledge for a global audience.

JESSD publishes under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License** (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license permits others to copy, distribute, and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, provided the original work is properly cited. Authors retain the copyright of their work while granting JESSD the right of first publication and non-exclusive rights for dissemination in all forms and

media. This model safeguards both authors' ownership and the widest possible scholarly usage.

7. Archiving, Digital Preservation, and Data Availability Policy

JESSD ensures the long-term accessibility and preservation of its published content through multiple archiving systems. All articles are permanently stored in the Madda Walabu University Institutional Repository and in the Open Journal Systems (OJS) repository. The journal is also registered with DataCite, and each article is assigned a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to guarantee persistent access and reliable citation.

In addition, JESSD participates in international digital preservation initiatives, including LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) and CLOCKSS (Controlled LOCKSS), which provide secure and redundant archiving. These measures ensure that content remains accessible even in the event of technical failures or institutional changes, preserving the scholarly records.

JESSD also encourages authors to provide a **Data Availability Statement** with their submissions. Authors are expected to make research data that support their findings available in FAIR-compliant repositories (institutional, disciplinary, or general-purpose, such as Zenodo), unless restricted by ethical, legal, or confidentiality constraints. Linking datasets through DOIs enhances transparency, reproducibility, and the long-term usability of research outputs. However, where open sharing is not possible, authors should clearly explain the reasons and provide metadata or access conditions.

8. Indexing and Abstracting Policy

JESSD is currently indexed in the Madda Walabu University Institutional Repository and other recognized platforms that enhance the visibility and accessibility of its content. The journal is also indexed in Google Scholar, AJOL, EBSCO, EJOL, and Copernicus, which broaden its academic reach and citation potential.

JESSD is actively pursuing inclusion in leading international indexing and abstracting databases such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Scopus, and the Web of

Science. To meet the requirements of these indexing services, JESSD maintains rigorous editorial standards, transparent peer review processes, robust ethical policies in line with COPE guidelines, and a commitment to high-quality, original scholarship. These efforts strengthen the journal's global visibility, credibility, and impact.

9. Conflicts of Interest Policy

JESSD requires all authors, reviewers, and editors to disclose any potential conflicts of interest that could inappropriately influence their judgment or compromise the integrity of the publication process. Conflicts of interest may be financial, institutional, professional, or personal in nature. Examples include (but are not limited to): receiving funding, salary, or other forms of compensation from an organization that may benefit from the publication; holding stocks, patents, or memberships related to the manuscript's content; or having close personal or professional relationships with individuals involved in the research or its evaluation.

Transparency in funding sources and sponsorship is mandatory. Authors must clearly state all sources of research support in their manuscripts. If no conflicts exist, authors should explicitly declare: “**No conflict of interest was disclosed.**” Reviewers and editors must withdraw from the editorial or review process if a conflict arises. Failure to disclose conflicts of interest may result in manuscript rejection, retraction of published articles, or other editorial sanctions. Moreover, contributors agree to uphold the highest standards of integrity, objectivity, and transparency in publishing in JESSD.

10. Copyright Policy

JESSD allows authors to retain full copyright of their published works while granting the journal the right of first publication. All articles are published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license permits readers to copy, distribute, and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, provided that proper attribution is given to the original authors and to JESSD as the place of first publication.

This policy ensures that scholarly works are widely accessible while respecting the rights of authors. JESSD places particular emphasis on protecting indigenous knowledge, community-based practices, and sensitive cultural data. Authors are required to handle such material responsibly and in accordance with ethical standards, ensuring that permissions and acknowledgments are appropriately included.

11. Research Integrity and Ethical Approval

JESSD is committed to upholding the highest standards of research integrity. Authors must ensure that all research is conducted responsibly, transparently, and in compliance with the JESSD and recognized international standards. Research involving human participants, human material, sensitive personal data, or animals must receive prior approval from an accredited ethical review board or equivalent body.

Manuscripts must clearly state details of ethical approval, including the name of the approving institution and reference number, where applicable. For studies involving human subjects, authors must confirm that informed consent was obtained and that participant confidentiality and data protection measures were ensured. For research involving animals, authors must demonstrate adherence to internationally accepted standards for animal welfare. However, failure to provide adequate evidence of ethical compliance may result in rejection of the manuscript or retraction of a published article.

12. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

JESSD is committed to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion across all aspects of its editorial and publishing practices. The journal actively encourages submissions from underrepresented groups, promotes gender balance and international representation in its editorial and advisory boards, and ensures that all manuscripts are evaluated solely on scholarly merit without bias.

Authors are required to use inclusive, respectful, and non-discriminatory language in their submissions. JESSD particularly welcomes research that addresses issues of justice, equity, inclusivity, and sustainable development, with special attention to perspectives from

marginalized communities and voices from the Global South. Through these practices, JESSD seeks to create an equitable platform that reflects and advances diverse contributions to science and development.

13. Plagiarism and Misconduct Handling

As mentioned in section 4, under publication ethics, JESSD takes issues of plagiarism and research misconduct very seriously. All submissions are screened using Turnitin plagiarism detection software, and the maximum acceptable similarity index is 20% (excluding preliminary pages, references, quotations, and standard methodological expressions). Minor textual overlap within this threshold may require revision, but cases exceeding this limit or involving deliberate plagiarism, duplicate submission, fabrication, falsification, or redundant publication will result in immediate rejection of the manuscript or retraction of the published article.

JESSD follows the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) flowcharts in handling all suspected cases of misconduct. Authors will be given the opportunity to respond to concerns, but in serious cases, the journal may notify the authors' affiliated institutions or funding bodies. Misconduct may also lead to further editorial sanctions, including a ban on future submissions. These measures ensure that JESSD maintains the highest standards of research integrity, accountability, and scholarly trust.

14. Withdrawal Policy

In principle, JESSD discourages withdrawal of manuscripts once they have been submitted, as such actions waste the time and effort of editors, reviewers, and the editorial team. Authors who wish to withdraw a manuscript must submit a formal written request to the Editor-in-Chief, clearly stating the reasons for withdrawal.

Manuscripts may be withdrawn if the request is made before the peer review process begins. However, once peer review is underway, withdrawal will only be considered under exceptional circumstances, and authors must provide strong justification for their decision. Withdrawal after acceptance is not at all permitted, except in cases of proven ethical, legal,

or technical issues that affect the validity of the manuscript. In such cases, the editorial team will review the request carefully before making a final decision.

Unethical withdrawal practices, such as submitting to JESSD and then withdrawing without explanation in order to publish elsewhere are considered serious breaches of publication ethics. Such actions may result in editorial sanctions, including a ban on future submissions to JESSD. This policy ensures fairness, accountability, and respect for the peer-review process.

15. Appeals and Complaints Process

JESSD provides a fair and transparent process for handling appeals and complaints in line with the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines of the publisher (Madda Walabu University). Authors who wish to appeal an editorial decision may submit a reasoned written request to the Editor-in-Chief, explaining the grounds for the appeal and providing supporting evidence where relevant. Appeals are reviewed carefully and, when appropriate, referred to independent members of the Editorial or Advisory Board to ensure impartiality. The final decision on appeals rests with the Editor-in-Chief.

Complaints relating to editorial conduct, review delays, conflicts of interest, or breaches of ethical standards will be handled with fairness, confidentiality, and due process. All complaints should be submitted in writing to the Editor-in-Chief, who will acknowledge receipt and initiate an investigation. When required, complaints may be reviewed by the Editorial Board or referred to external experts. Outcomes may include clarification, correction, or, in cases of proven misconduct, editorial sanctions. JESSD is committed to addressing all appeals and complaints promptly, transparently, and in accordance with COPE-recommended procedures.

16. Journal Quality Assurance Policy

JESSD is committed to maintaining high editorial and publishing standards through continuous quality assurance strategies. The journal conducts annual policy reviews and

benchmarking exercises against internationally recognized open-access and peer-reviewed journals to ensure alignment with global best practices.

Editors and members of the editorial team regularly participate in professional development and training programs to strengthen their expertise in scholarly publishing, peer review, and ethical standards. JESSD also actively collects feedback from authors, reviewers, and readers to improve editorial processes, publication quality, and overall user experience.

Key performance indicators monitored by the journal include acceptance and rejection rates, peer review turnaround times, citation metrics, and indexing achievements. These measures are evaluated systematically to maintain editorial efficiency, ensure timely dissemination of research, and enhance the journal's international visibility and competitiveness.

17. Dissemination and Visibility Policy

JESSD is highly committed to maximizing the visibility, discoverability, accessibility of its published contents. The journal leverages digital platforms to broaden its reach, with a website designed for ease of access, mobile compatibility, and user-friendly navigation. To enhance discoverability, articles are disseminated through academic networks, social media channels, institutional mailing lists, and email alerts. JESSD also strengthens visibility and credibility by partnering with recognized platforms such as African Journals Online (AJOL) and other international indexing and abstracting services.

Through adopting these strategies mentioned above, JESSD actively promotes its content to global research communities, aiming to increase readership, citation impact, and scholarly engagement in the fields of equity, science, and sustainable development.

20. Disclaimer

The views expressed in articles published by JESSD are those of the authors. The journal, editors, and publisher bear no responsibility for errors, omissions, or consequences arising from the use of published content. Authors are solely accountable for the accuracy and integrity of their work.