

PEER REVIEW GUIDELINE

REPROSEX: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Peer review is a fundamental and vital component of scholarly publishing, in which experts in a relevant field critically evaluate a manuscript such as a research paper, review, case study, or commentary before it is accepted for publication. It plays an essential role to ensure credibility, relevance, and scholarly integrity of the research, originality, helping to maintain high academic standards across published literature. For ReproSex International Journal on Sexual and Reproductive Health, peer review serves as a quality control mechanism that helps ensure that published research is not only credible and methodologically sound but also relevant to the evolving needs and challenges in the field of sexual and reproductive health and right (SRHR). This process safeguards the integrity of the academic record and promotes a culture of continuous scholarly improvement.

As an international, open-access, peer-reviewed journal, ReproSex depends on the voluntary contributions of qualified reviewers who uphold high standards of scientific rigor, objectivity, and ethical conduct. Reviewers serve not only as evaluators but also as mentors, offering authors constructive feedback that strengthens the clarity, coherence, and impact of their work.

This guideline is intended to provide clear, practical, and ethical guidance for reviewers engaged in the evaluation of manuscripts submitted to ReproSex. It outlines our expectations regarding confidentiality, conflict of interest, timeliness, review quality, biasness, professionalism and accountability. It also affirms our commitment to a respectful, quality-oriented review process that supports reviewers in contributing to an inclusive and respectful scholarly in SRHR.

This document also affirms ReproSex's commitment to multidisciplinary and equity-focused academic inquiry. As such, reviewers are encouraged to approach each manuscript with an open mind, respecting diverse methodologies.

AIM & SCOPE

ReproSex: International Journal on Sexual and Reproductive Health is a peer-reviewed, international, open-access journal dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding across the diverse field of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It is an official publication of The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka, an accredited member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation since 1954.

The journal aims to publish high-quality original research, reviews, commentaries, case reports and policy analyses that address critical gaps in SRHR knowledge and inform the development of laws, policies, services, and practices that uphold the rights and meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of people across all ages, gender identities, and sexual orientations. ReproSex: International Journal on Sexual and Reproductive Health adopts a multidisciplinary perspective, welcoming contributions from a broad range of disciplines including, but not limited to, Medicine, Public Health, Social Sciences, Humanities, Behavioural Sciences, Demography, Economics, Law, Biometry, and Biostatistics. The journal is committed to inclusive academic inquiry and supports diverse epistemological and methodological paradigms ranging from positivism and interpretivism to feminism and pragmatism. We particularly encourage submissions that centre the voices, experiences, values, and realities of individuals and communities most affected by SRHR issues. ReproSex: International Journal on Sexual and Reproductive Health embraces a wide range of methodological approaches, including qualitative and quantitative research, policy analysis, mixed-methods studies, health finance, health systems and implementation research, economic and political analysis, historical inquiries, and epidemiological investigations; all with a rights-based and equity-focused lens.

While the journal welcomes studies focused on specific local or national contexts, authors are expected to articulate their findings with broader regional or global relevance to ensure meaningful engagement with our international readership. ReproSex: International Journal on Sexual and Reproductive Health is published biannually in June and December. The journal also considers the publication of special issues (supplements) based on thematic priorities or stakeholder requests. All articles are published in English.

BEFORE STARTING THE REVIEW PROCESS

The peer review process for the Sexual and Reproductive Health Journal is conducted by a formally appointed expert review committee. Members are selected based on their qualifications, field experience, and commitment to upholding the journal's academic and ethical standards. Before undertaking the review of the assigned manuscripts, committee members are expected to ensure the following:

Relevance of Expertise

Review committee members should assess whether the manuscript falls their field of expertise. A clear understanding of the subject matter, research methodology, and context of the manuscript is essential to provide an informed and constructive review. If any aspect lies outside your primary expertise, notify the editorial board to allow for appropriate reassignment or clarification.

Conflicts of interest and Bias

Always review objectively. Avoid being influenced by authors' nationality, gender, beliefs, institutional affiliation, or any commercial interests. Members must declare any actual or perceived conflicts of interest prior to reviewing. This includes:

- Recent (within the past three years) collaboration with the author(s).
- Institutional affiliation with the author(s)
- Financial or intellectual interests related to the manuscript content
- Any personal or professional circumstances that could compromise objectivity.

If a conflict exists or is uncertain, inform the editorial office immediately for guidance/instructions. Maintaining the transparency and neutrality of the review process is critical.

Availability and Timeliness

Given the journal's commitment to timely publication, expert reviewers should ensure they are available to complete the review within the stipulated timeframe. If circumstances prevent timely submission, inform the editorial team promptly to allow for schedule adjustment or reassignment.

Confidentiality and Professional Conduct

All the manuscripts under the review are strictly confidential. Committee members must not share, copy, or discuss the content with others outside the review panel unless explicitly authorized by the editorial team. The manuscript should not be used for personal or academic gain prior to its publication.

By agreeing to participate in the review, expert committee members affirm their commitment to fair, unbiased, and ethical evaluation in line with the guidelines.

Ethical Concern

If you suspect any misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, data fabrication, ethical approval issues), inform the committee confidentially. Do not attempt to investigate on your own. The editorial board will handle the situation according to ethical standards.

CONDUCTING A REVIEW

Once a manuscript is assigned, reviewers are expected to engage in a careful, thorough, and impartial evaluation of the submission. Reviews should focus on both the scientific and ethical quality of the work, as well as its relevance and contribution to the field of SRH.

The first step when reading is to figure out what the authors are trying to claim. It might be helpful to ask yourself these questions:

- What is the study about? What is the main research question?
- What is the approach? What did the authors do to address their research question?
- What is the context? How does the study relate to published literature on this topic?

What are the conclusions? What are the authors' main findings and what evidence do they provide for these conclusions?

Make sure you read the entire manuscript, including the figures. You should expect to read through the manuscript at least twice. It's generally a good idea to read from beginning to end, but this is not always the case.

Use the evaluation form in Annex 01 to guide your review of each section of the manuscript. Make note of its strengths, weaknesses, and areas that need improvement.

Abstract

The abstract should concisely summarize the research problem, objectives, methods, key findings, and conclusions. It should provide a standalone overview of the study and highlight its relevance and contribution to the field of Sexual and Reproductive Health.

When reviewing the abstract, consider the following questions:

- Is the main research question or objective clearly stated, and is the tested hypothesis clearly identified?
- Are the hypotheses or research questions described appropriately?
- Are the methods summarized clearly, including study population, data collection, and analysis?
- Are the results described using relevant data (e.g., statistical or qualitative findings)?
- Are statistical methods summarized clearly, including study population, data collection, and analysis?
- Are the results described using relevant data (e.g., statistics or qualitative findings)?
- Are statistical measures (e.g., p-value, odds ratios, confidence intervals) included where relevant?
- Does the abstract avoid use of tables, graphs, or figures?
- Are the conclusions clearly stated and consistent with the results?
- Do the authors highlight the novelty and contribution to evidence-based practice?
- Are there any next steps or applications of the research mentioned?

Introduction

The introduction should set the context for the study by explaining the research argument, summarizing recent literature, and identifying existing knowledge gaps or resolved issues. It should clearly define the study's purpose, originality, and target audience. A strong introduction justifies why the research is both timely and important, especially in the SRH context.

When reviewing the introduction, consider the following questions:

- Have the authors referenced relevant literature appropriately?
- Have they discussed how the work relates to literature?
- Is the problem clearly stated?
- Are background and rationale appropriate?
- Is the significance and potential impact of the study well justified?
- Do the authors explain how their study adds new insights or addresses these gaps?

Methods

Assess whether the study is scientifically sound and reproducible.

- Are the methods appropriate for answering the research question?
- What experience or interventions were used?
- Are details about the experiments or interventions clearly described?
- Who is responsible for data collection, and what qualifications or training did they have?
- Are there proper controls and adequate sample sizes and places?
- Have the limitations or potential sources of bias been addressed?
- Is the ethical approval mentioned (If applicable)?
- Could another researcher reproduce the study with the same method?
- Have the authors provided enough information to validate the study?
- Do the authors follow the best practices for reporting?
- Does the study align with the ethical guidelines?

Results, Discussion, and Conclusion

This part should interpret findings accurately and reasonably.

- Do the results align with the conclusion?
- Are there signs of overgeneralization or overreach?
- Do the authors discuss future directions?
- Does the study offer new insight or advancement in the field?

Authors should be transparent about the limitations of their study. When reviewing, consider whether the manuscript clearly identifies the boundaries of the study's findings and acknowledges potential weaknesses. Specifically:

- Are the study's limitations clearly stated and well explained?
- Do the authors reflect on how these limitations may affect the validity, generalizability, or interpretation of the results?
- Are any biases, methodological constraints, or data gaps adequately discussed?
- Is there any indication that the limitations were downplayed or overlooked?
- Have the authors suggested how future research could address these limitations?

Figures, Tables, Graphs

These should accurately support the study's findings and be clear and well present.

- Are they easy to read and understand?
- Are they clear?
- Are all axes, labels, and units clearly and accurately marked?
- Do they match the data discussed in the text?
- Are they complete and accurate?
- Do they support the study's findings?

Statistical Analysis

Is the statistical analysis adequate? Are the statistical methods described and justified? If you do not have the expertise to consider the statistics, make sure that you have mentioned this in your review report.

Data and Supporting Information

Look for transparency and completeness.

- Is enough data provided to support the conclusions?
- Are raw or supplementary data files available? (If relevant?)
- Can other researchers verify or build on this work with the data provided?

Other things to check

Writing quality & Clarity

As a reviewer, you should focus on the substance of the research rather than writing. If you think the quality of the writing needs to be improved, don't spend your time pointing out individual typos and other minor details. Just mention in your comments that you recommend language editing.

Plagiarism

If you have reason to believe the authors might have plagiarized, add your concern as a confidential comment to the editor section of the review report.

Reference list

Check the references in the manuscript. Mention any literature that is missing from the list, but do not use this as an opportunity to request citations for your own works.

Equator Network guidelines

Reviewers are encouraged to refer to the Equator Network guidelines on reporting scientific research to enhance transparency, ensure completeness of reporting, align with the standards of international peer-reviewed journals.

<https://www.equator-network.org>

PREPARING A REPORT

Format

Always follow the journal's specific instructions when writing and submitting your review. Please use the format that provided by the Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka. Your review should be objective, clear and helpful, offering feedback that supports the authors in their work.

- Be specific in your comment.
- Use evidence or references to back up your points.
- Avoid vague or overly general feedback.

Providing Appropriate Feedback

The editor depends on you for a fair and honest evaluation of the manuscript's strengths and weaknesses.

- Any recommendations should match your comments
- If you did not review the full manuscript, clearly say which parts you assessed.

Avoid using confidential comments to the editors as a space for inappropriate criticism or negative remarks that would not be shared with the authors. Comments to both the editors and authors should be aligned and transparent.

Language and Style

- Always respect the authors' voice
- Focus on clarity: Suggest improvements only where clarity or understanding is affected.
- Be mindful of language differences: If the authors are not native speakers, offer your comments with respect and sensitivity, avoiding harsh or dismissive language.

Suggestions for the future Work

While assessing the quality and completeness of the manuscript, if the essential analyses are missing, point them out clearly and explain why they are needed.

You are not expected to suggest new directions or major expansions beyond the scope of the current study only what's necessary to support the claims made.

PEER REVIEW EVALUATION FORM

Manuscript No.:	
Manuscript Title:	
Name of the Reviewer:	
Date of Review:	

For the Research Articles

Criteria	Score (0-10)	Guidance for Evaluation
01. Aligning with ReproSex: Aims and Scopes		Is the topic relevant to SRHR and to ReproSex's scope and relationship? Note: If the manuscript does not align with the aims and scope, there is no need to assess the remaining aspects.
Remarks:		
02. Abstract		Does the abstract summarize key aims, methods, findings, and conclusions clearly and accurately?
Remarks:		
03. Introduction		Is the problem clearly stated? Are background and rationale appropriate and well-referenced?
Remarks:		

Criteria	Score (0-10)	Guidance for Evaluation
04. Objectives/ Aims		Are the study objectives or aims or research questions clearly defined and relevant?
Remarks:		
05. Methodology		Are the methods including the study design, experimental design, sampling, and data collection appropriate, well-described, ethical, and rigorous?
Remarks:		
06. Data Analysis		Are data analysis techniques appropriate and scientific?
Remarks:		
07. Results/ Findings		Are the findings clearly presented, accurate, and aligned with the objectives?
Remarks:		
08. Discussion		Are the results/ findings interpreted well? Is the discussion insightful and detailed?
Remarks:		
09. Conclusion		Are the conclusions supported by the results? Are limitations acknowledged? Are there recommendations?
Remarks:		

Criteria	Score (0-10)	Guidance for Evaluation
10. Originality and Contribution		Does the paper offer new insights, innovations, or meaningful contribution to the field?
Remarks:		
11. Writing quality and Organization		Is the manuscript well-written, clear, logical, and professionally presented?
Remarks:		
12. Ethical Consideration		Were ethical standards upheld? Is there evidence of ethical clearance/informed consent?
Remarks:		

For Practice Based Papers (Optional)

If the manuscript includes a practice-based / intervention-based analysis, please assess it using the following criteria:

1. Are the laboratory methods clearly described and appropriate for the study objectives?	
2. Were validated and standardized testing protocols used?	
3. Were instruments properly calibrated, and are calibration procedures documented?	
4. Is the reliability and validity of the tests supported by evidence or references?	
5. Who conducted the laboratory tests, and what qualifications or training did they have?	
6. Were quality control measures in place during laboratory procedures?	
7. Are laboratory findings presented transparently and consistently with best practices?	

For the laboratory tests-based manuscripts (Optional):

Please complete the following table, only if laboratory tests were used. Please assess them using the following criteria:

1. Is the problem clearly described?	
2. Are the aims of the project or policy clearly stated?	
3. Is the approach or intervention described clearly and logically?	
4. Are the outcomes or impacts (social, community, or political) well presented?	
5. Does the abstract reflect results from completed or ongoing work?	
6. Is it clear why this project or policy is unique and significant?	

Total Score:...../120

<i>Score Range</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
100 – 120	Strongly recommended for publication
80 – 99	Recommended with minor revisions
50 – 79	Consider after major revisions
Below 50	Not recommended

Reviewer Comments to Author:

Confidential comments for the Editors: