Universiteiten
van Nederland

Casus Wetenschappelijke Integriteit

2026

Onjuiste weergave van project in publicatie - Ongegrond

Wageningen University & Research

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1 Onderwerp

Onjuiste weergave van een project, misleidende geïnformeerde toestemmingsverklaring in een publicatie en weigering van Beklaagde om de beoordeling van dit project te heroverwegen en contact op te nemen met Klager.

2 Advies Commissie Wetenschappelijke Integriteit Wageningen University & Research aan het college van bestuur

1 The Complaint

On [date] [year], the Scientific Integrity Committee of Wageningen University & Research (hereafter: CWI) received a complaint of [Name] (hereafter: Complainant). Complainant supplemented his complaint on [date] and [date] [year].

The complaint regarded […] of [Name] (hereafter: Accused), in particular […] published in [Journal] in [Month] [year]: […] (Hereafter: Publication]. […].

Complainant managed a project ([Name] (hereafter: Project) […] for nearly […] years. This project was one of the case studies that were examined in Publication. According to Complainant, Project was misrepresented in the publication as it was described as a failure, while it was very successful in reality.

After Complainant learned about the publication, he submitted formal objections against it to Accused and demanded a rectification in [Month] [year]. Due to a lack of response, Complainant submitted his objections to the publisher of the journal in [Month] [year].

In Complainant's view, the first principle of the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity was breached, which states: "*Honesty means, among other things, reporting the research process accurately, taking alternative opinions and counterarguments seriously, being open about margins of uncertainty, refraining from making unfounded claims, refraining from fabricating or falsifying data or sources and refraining from presenting results more favourably or unfavourably than they actually are.*"

The complaint comprised 3 topics:

1. Misrepresentation of Project in Publication […] on at least five accounts;
2. Misleading informed consent statement;
3. Refusal of Accused to reconsider the assessment of Project and to communicate with Complainant.

The CWI decided to deal with the complaint. Besides Complainant and Accused, the CWI interviewed [Name] (hereafter: Witness) as a witness during the investigation of the complaint. Witness was […] one of

Vereniging Universiteiten van Nederland

Lange Houtstraat 2
Postbus 13739
2501 ES Den Haag

Tel +31 70 302 14 00
E-mail post@unl.nl
Web universiteitenvannederland.nl

KvK 40480226
IBAN NL61 INGB 0001 5964 15
BTW NL007088784B01

the coauthors of Publication. The complaint dossier and a timeline of the relevant events, including the timeline of the complaint procedure, are given in Appendix 1 and 2, respectively.

2 Composition of the CWI

The CWI that dealt with the complaint consisted of:
- [Name] (chair)
- [Name]
- [Name]
- [Name]

The CWI was assisted by [Name] (secretary) in drafting its advice.

3 Views of parties involved

The complaint centred on Publication that was published in [year[[…]. The complaint comprised three topics:

1. Misrepresentation of Project in Publication […] on at least five accounts;
2. Misleading informed consent statement;
3. Refusal of Accused to reconsider the assessment of Project and to communicate with Complainant.

The passages in the publication that were addressed in topics 1 and 2 of the complaint are:

I. "*[…]*" (Paragraph […]).
II. "*[…]*" (Paragraph […]).
III. "*[…]*" (Paragraph […]).
IV. "*[…]*" (Paragraph […]).
V. "*[…]*" (Paragraph […]).
VI. "*[…]*" (Paragraph […]).
VII. "*[…]*" (Paragraph […]).
VIII. "***Informed Consent Statement:** […]*

3.1 View Complainant

Complainant directed his complaint only against Accused, as he is the leading author of Publication and […]. Besides the three topics of the complaint (misrepresentation of Project, misleading informed consent statement, refusal to adjust and communicate), Complainant was critical of the publication itself. According to Complainant, […].

Complainant stated that the authors of Publication did not understand the information that Complainant provided to them and that they should have discussed their conclusions with Complainant first. Complainant said that there is a systemic element behind the complaint in the sense that […].

3.1.1 Misrepresentation of Project

According to Complainant, Project was misrepresented in Publication […] on at least five accounts due to i) incorrect negative referencing to Project by unjustly claiming that the project failed to […], and ii) the omission of relevant […] of Project.

According to Complainant, Project has been extremely successful in […] and […], representing the most significant change in […]. Therefore, the project deserved a critical and independent analysis and did not

deserve to be described as a failure as this is incorrect and unfair to the project and a dis-service to the academic audience.

Complainant referred to […] (Hereafter: Document 1, Dossier #[…]) to support this claim in his written complaint. During the hearing, Complainant stated that this information was also included in the '[…]' (hereafter: Document 2, Dossier #[…]), which Complainant sent to Accused when he was interviewed.

Regarding the negative references to Project, Complainant referred to 4 passages:
- Passages II and V mentioned […]. Complainant acknowledged that this has been a challenge, but pointed out that Project used several methods to overcome this.
- Passages I and III concerned […]. According to Complainant, the aim of Project was […]. The suggestion that […], which is a paradigm in the field of Complainant, is incorrect as Project proved that […]. […]. According to Complainant the authors misinterpreted this part in their publication.

Regarding the omission of reference to positive experiences of Project, Complainant referred to three passages in which Project should have been mentioned as well as it was very successful on these aspects:
- With respect to passage IV, Project […] and was very successful in it.
- Regarding passage VI, Project […].
- With respect to passage VII, Project […].

3.1.2 Misleading informed consent statement

Passage VIII is included in the publication as the Informed Consent Statement. Complainant considered this statement to be misleading as it gives the impression that Complainant consented to the publication. Complainant stated that he agreed to be interviewed, but that this could in no way be interpreted as his consent with the conclusions of the paper or with the way his case was presented in the publication. […].

3.1.3 Refusal to adjust and communicate

Complainant submitted his objection to Publication to Accused when he learned about the publication. As Complainant never obtained a substantive response, he forwarded his objection to the publisher of [Journal]. According to Complainant, the publisher contacted Accused about his complaint […]. […], the publisher asked Accused to adjust Publication, but Accused decided to ignore all communication and refused to reconsider his assessment of the project based on the detailed information in Document 1 that Complainant provided to Accused. Complainant never received a response from Accused.

3.2 View Accused

3.2.1 Misrepresentation of Project

Accused denied that Project was misrepresented in Publication […].
The statements about […] and […] are accurate and traceable in the […] Interview that was held with Complainant in [year] and the underlying programme materials of Project that were supplied at the time by Complainant.

The focus of the publication was on […]. The objective of the publication was […]. Accused only used specific cases as an example when they strengthened the message. Project was therefore only referenced where its experiences aligned with broader themes emerging from the data. Besides, Project was not singled out as an example as it was presented as one of the [number] cases that reported challenges with […]. Moreover, nowhere in the publication was stated that Project failed to […].

Accused acknowledged that Project took mitigating measures, but pointed out that the objective was not to assess the adequacy of individual project responses or to evaluate a specific project.

Accused pointed out that Complainant referred to a document (Document 1) that was published after the publication came out when stating that Accused failed to include certain information. Therefore, Accused regarded the objection of Complainant as a request to add favourable material to […], not as a correction of an error as Complainant did not dispute the underlying facts but objected that the mitigation measures that Project took later and the successes achieved later were not included.

3.2.2 Misleading informed consent statement

Accused agreed with the statement of Complainant that his consent to be interviewed did not extend to consent with the conclusions in the publication. Accused said that apparently there has been a misunderstanding about the meaning of the informed consent statement (passage VIII). Accused confirmed that informed consent meant consenting with the data collection (i.e. agreeing to participate in the study). It did not mean to consent with the interpretation of the data. The latter cannot be the case as objectivity would be lost.

3.2.3 Refusal to adjust and communicate

Accused denied the accusation that he has not been responsive. Accused responded to Complainant's first objections that were sent to him directly and requested time for reviewing when Complainant described the issues in more detail later. After Complainant's objections were submitted to [Journal] on [date] [year], Accused communicated solely with the journal as he felt that he was obliged to follow the formal path. Accused responded extensively to Complainant's objections on [date] [year]. In this response, Accused proposed to invite Complainant to submit a formal response or commentary to the journal and also indicated that the authors were open to a joint discussion with Complainant and the editorial team of [Journal]. When the editor forwarded further material from Complainant on [date] year], Accused responded again on [date] [year]. Accused always assumed that the journal shared his responses with Complainant. Accused found it very unfortunate that Complainant appeared not to have received his responses to the journal.

Accused assumed that the issue was solved as he did not hear anything for a long time after his first rebuttal of [date] [year]. When Accused received the request of the journal to make major corrections on [date] [year], he respectfully declined as Accused and the other authors were convinced that the publication accurately reflected the data available at the time of research and adhered to established methodological standards, while factual inaccuracies or misrepresentation were not demonstrated. According to Accused, the issues presented by Complainant reflect a difference in interpretation, which is a normal and valuable part of academic discourse and should be addressed through scholarly dialogue.

3.3 View Witness

Witness was aware of the complaint of Complainant that was submitted to [Journal]. Witness was surprised when he heard about the submission of the complaint to the CWI as the complaint procedure at [Journal] has not been completed yet.

3.3.1 Misrepresentation of Project

Witness and the other authors of Publication believed that the objections of Complainant against the publication arose from a scientific difference of opinion, which should be part of an academic discussion as they already indicated multiple times. Complainant focused heavily on his own project, but the publication was not intended to provide a detailed analysis of the [number] projects, but rather to examine similarities

between the projects in terms of […]. The conclusions in the publication were based on [number] projects, not only on Project.

3.3.2 Misleading informed consent statement

According to Witness, consent was given for the interview. Passage VIII refers to that. It is not customary in this type of research to seek consent about the content of the publication.

3.3.3 Refusal to adjust and communicate

Witness found the allegation that Accused did not respond unjustified, as Accused responded to the e-mails from Complainant and later to the journal after Complainant filed his complaint. He expected that the journal would share the rebuttals of Accused with Complainant. Witness is of the opinion that the journal was very slow in responding.

Witness said there was no need to adjust the publication, nor […] as no mistakes were made in the analyses of the data and the conclusions that were drawn were not incorrect. Both problems ([…] and […]) were seen by multiple projects and the general conclusions did not change.

4 Considerations and conclusions of the CWI

Complainant indicated that he is of the opinion that Publication did not highlight the proper issues and therefore did not contribute to the development of knowledge. The CWI considers this to be part of a scientific debate and does not regard it as a matter of research integrity. The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity also explicitly states that complaints that are related to methodological discussions and standard academic debates are inadmissible. Furthermore, authors are free to determine the purpose, scope, and objectives of their publications, and anyone is free to contribute to scientific discourse and to the advancement of scientific knowledge. The CWI therefore concluded that this part of the complaint is unfounded.

Complainant referred to a document (Document 1) that was published in [year] to substantiate his complaint. The analyses that were described in Publication of [year] were done in [year]. […]. The CWI therefore did not use the information in Document 1 to determine the validity of the complaint as it did not represent the situation in [year].

4.1 Misrepresentation of Project

One part of the complaint was that Project was incorrectly referenced in a negative way with respect to […] and […]. However, the evidence showed that both issues were mentioned as […] within Project in the […] Interview with Complainant and/or the documentation about Project. Complainant confirmed this but considered it unfair that the mitigating measures that were taken by Project were not mentioned. Accused on the other hand pointed out that the objective was not to assess the adequacy of individual project responses or to evaluate a specific project but to highlight structural challenges common to […]. Accused also said that specific cases were only used as an example when they strengthened the message.

Another part of the complaint was the alleged omission of positive aspects from Project, in particular in passages regarding […] and […] and […]. Complainant referred to three passages in which Project should have been mentioned as a positive example.

Passage IV stressed […]. Accused explained that the project that was referred to in this passage […]. The CWI therefore concluded that this sentence should be interpreted as a lesson that was learnt. The CWI also noticed that in paragraph […] of the publication, Project was mentioned in [number] of [number] […] in

Table [number] and another [number] times in the text as an example of a project that employed particular […]. This showed that […] of Project were acknowledged in the publication.

With respect to passage VI about […], the CWI observed that the publication focused on […] and that passage VI was also written is this context. The […] record of the interview with Complainant showed that Complainant mentioned that Project did not look into that particular part of […]. Moreover, no evidence was provided that proved otherwise.

Regarding passage VII ([…]), the CWI noticed that none of the [number] projects were mentioned and regarded this passage therefore as a general statement. In Table [number], Project was mentioned as a project in which "[…]" was included, showing the author's recognition that […] was taken into account in Project.

Due to the above, the CWI concluded that this part of the complaint is unfounded. The evidence showed that the passages in the publication were well-founded, and no evidence was provided of unfounded claims, data fabrication of falsification, or misrepresentation of results.

4.2 Misleading informed consent statement

The CWI noticed that there has been a misunderstanding about the meaning of the informed consent statement (passage VIII). Informed consent means that the participant consents to participate in a study and is aware of the nature and purpose of the investigation. It does not mean that the participant agreed with the interpretation of the research data. Therefore, this part of the complaint is unfounded.

4.3 Refusal to adjust and communicate

The evidence provided showed that Accused responded promptly when Complainant first raised his objections to Publication. After Complainant submitted his detailed objections, Accused requested additional time to respond following a reminder from Complainant.

After the submission of the complaint to [Journal], Accused responded to the journal's request regarding the complaint within a reasonable timeframe. Both Accused and Complainant communicated solely with the journal, which was appropriate given the formal nature of the procedure.

The CWI noticed that the complaint procedure at the journal progressed very slowly and, understandably, this caused considerable frustration for both parties involved. It appeared that Accused's comprehensive rebuttals were not shared with Complainant. This unfortunate situation resulted from the journal's handling of the matter and cannot be attributed to Accused. Therefore, this part of the complaint is unfounded.

The refusal of the authors to adjust the publication is understandable as they are of the opinion that there is no evidence for factual incorrectness nor mistakes in the analyses. As described in 4.1, the CWI also concluded this.

5 Advice CWI

The CWI advises the Executive Board of Wageningen University to declare Complaint CWI 2026-06 to be unfounded.
The CWI advises the Executive Board of Wageningen University to recommend that the Complainant engages directly with the authors to clarify and address any misunderstandings relating to [Journal's] complaint procedure.

Appendix 1. Complaint dossier CWI 2026-06
The complaint dossier of Complaint CWI 2026-06 is given in the table below. Both Complainant and Accused had full access to all documents in the Complaint dossier.

[Complaint dossier]

Appendix 2. Timeline

Based on the information that was obtained, the CWI constructed a timeline with the relevant events that took place before the complaint was submitted to the CWI and the subsequent complaint procedure of the CWI.

[Timeline]

3 Aanvankelijk oordeel van het college van bestuur

Het college van bestuur van Wageningen University heeft in zijn aanvankelijk oordeel besloten om de klacht ongegrond te verklaren conform het advies van de Commissie Wetenschappelijke Integriteit.

4 LOWI

Er is geen advies gevraagd aan het LOWI.

5 Definitief oordeel van het college van bestuur

Op 26 oktober 2026 heeft het college van bestuur van Wageningen University in zijn definitieve oordeel de klacht ongegrond verklaard.