

Dr. Hayder A. Dhahad <Hayder.A.Dhahad@uotechnology.edu.iq>

Tue, Oct 7, 2025 at 8:14
AM

To: Frederik Joelsing <frederik@retractionwatch.com>

Dear Mr. Fred,

Thank you very much for your follow-up and for giving me the opportunity to clarify this matter in detail.

Regarding the so-called “suspicious changes in authorship,” I would like to explain the full background of how this collaboration took place and why the authorship adjustments were entirely scientifically justified and followed the recognized editorial and ethical standards in international publishing.

My professional collaboration began with Professor Hadi Ghaebi, a faculty member in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Mohaghegh Ardabili (Iran). In 2019, we established a joint research partnership between the University of Technology in Baghdad and the University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, which later grew into a multinational research team including researchers from Iraq, Iran, Vietnam, and China.

Our initial collaboration focused on a thermodynamics-related project, and the success of that work encouraged us to expand into new areas between 2019 and 2022. Over this period, several specialized teams were formed, covering topics such as fluid mechanics, energy systems, and renewable technologies. The collaboration naturally broadened as researchers from different universities joined, each contributing their expertise.

For the paper in question, “Air cooled lithium-ion battery with cylindrical cell in phase change material filled cavity of different shapes”, I served as the corresponding author, responsible for coordinating all contributors. Communication and task allocation were conducted via a WhatsApp group created by Prof. Ghaebi and through email correspondence. Each researcher was assigned a specific task, such as modeling, numerical simulation, data validation, or manuscript editing and these assignments were continuously reviewed in Zoom meetings to maintain scientific accuracy and transparency.

During the preparation and revision stages, our research team functioned as an active, collaborative network. In large, multidisciplinary projects like ours, it is entirely normal for contributors to change roles or for participation levels to evolve, especially when a project spans several months or years.

For example, some researchers initially handled data collection and parameter verification, but later could not continue into the modeling and manuscript-finalization stages due to time or institutional constraints. Following accepted publication ethics, their names were removed to ensure that only those who made direct and substantial intellectual contributions were retained. Conversely, when new researchers joined during the advanced modeling or simulation phases, they were added to the authorship list after clear discussions and mutual agreement among the team members.

All such updates were processed transparently through Elsevier’s Editorial Manager system, and the handling editor was informed of every change. The final author list was approved by the editor before publication, and at no point did the reviewers or editorial board raise any objection. These authorship modifications were not “suspicious,” but rather reflected a responsible adjustment to ensure that the final list of authors accurately represented those who intellectually and practically contributed to the research outcomes. This approach is fully consistent with the principles of COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) which emphasize transparency and contribution-based inclusion.

It is also essential to understand the historical context. Between 2020 and 2022, the concept of “paper mills” and the heightened global scrutiny over authorship practices were not yet widespread, particularly in Iraq and other regional institutions that were still developing formal publication ethics frameworks. At that time, such authorship adjustments were routine and accepted as normal

editorial practice. Therefore, these changes should be seen within the context of legitimate international collaboration that predated today's stricter standards introduced worldwide after 2023.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq has taken strong national steps to improve research integrity, such as establishing a platform for predatory-journal tracking and reforming promotion regulations. Unfortunately, these efforts have made us the target of deliberate campaigns since 2023, particularly during this politically sensitive election period. I trust that you, as an experienced investigative journalist, will appreciate this broader context and approach the matter with fairness and objectivity.

Thank you once again for your professionalism and attention to accuracy.

Sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Hayder A. Dhahad
Deputy Minister for Scientific Research Affairs

To access University of Technology- Iraq publications, please visit the following link <https://rsrt.uotechnology.edu.iq>

Kind regards,

Prof. Dr. Hayder A. Dhahad

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