

Re: Query publication [201220-002101] [210218-006595] [210508-005905]

From: Sci Tech Jrnls CS <JournalCustomerService-usa@elsevier.com>

To: helmy.m@protonmail.com <helmy.m@protonmail.com>

Date: Saturday, May 8th, 2021 at 5:19 PM

Dear Mohamed Helmy,

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From: Mohamed Helmy

Date: 08/05/2021 09.19 AM

Dear Mr. McDowell,

According to *Heliyon* Ethics and Editorial Policies, the evidence I submitted concerning the article by Lee *et al.* (2020) in my email to you on 20 December 2020 (see correspondence with references below) indicates that several policies may have been breached. This includes *Heliyon Reporting Standards*, such as accuracy of the information on data provided by the authors. Indeed, according to the *Elsevier Publishing Ethics Resource Kit for editors*, the evidence presented indicates gross inaccuracies and/or errors in the article, and may amount to fraud. To take one example, the issues concerning statistical manipulation of the data by the authors is in contradiction to ARRIVE guidelines (2.0).

In light of the evidence presented showing irregularities putatively amounting to research misconduct in the article by Lee *et al.* (2020), your statement that "...we have concluded that the points you have raised are not issues...", and which you made without presenting any evidence whatsoever, is simply dismissive and inadequate.

I am also puzzled by your choice of words in thanking me "...for taking the time to bring forward *your* issues to us..." (emphasis added). The issues are mine insofar that I am a member of the academic community. Any *issues* as such belong to *Heliyon* and the authors.

May I suggest that you please address the points 1 to 4 mentioned in my message of 20 December 2020. Since these points are 'not issues', and since the editorial review and discussion with the authors is complete, it should be a straight-forward matter to clarify why the evidence presented does not constitute issues. Failing that, I do not see why I should not publish our correspondence on www.nanyangscandal.com. Confidentiality is assumed during

an investigative process, and was honored. Now that the investigation is complete, what is your objection to publication of non-issues?

Kind regards,
Mohamed Helmy
MD, PhD

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helmy.m@protonmail.com
+65 83 555 817
10 Jurong Lake Link, #15-39
Singapore, 648131

----- Original Message -----

On Tuesday, March 30, 2021 4:00 AM, Schulz, Christian (ELS-AMS) <c.schulz@cell.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Helmy,

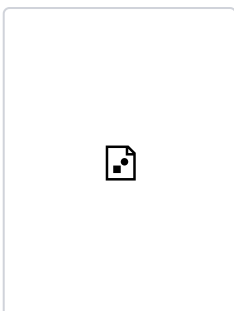
The authors have requested additional time to respond to this. We have allowed them a new deadline for 8.4.21.

With kind regards,

Christian Schulz



Dr. Christian Schulz | Cell Press | Lead Editor *Heliyon* | c.schulz@cell.com



The name *Heliyon* comes from “Helios,” the name for the Greek god of the sun. This name

gave us inspiration as we aspire to illuminate knowledge across a broad spectrum of research.

From: Helmy, M. <helmy.m@protonmail.com>

Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 06:35

To: Schulz, Christian (ELS-AMS) <c.schulz@cell.com>; JournalCustomerService-usa <JournalCustomerService-usa@elsevier.com>; elvira.brattico@clin.au.dk; elvira.brattico@uniba.it; janice.pluth@unlv.edu; wim.crusio@u-bordeaux.fr

Subject: RE: : Query publication [201220-002101] [210218-006595]

Dear Heliyon,

Regarding the article published in Heliyon in 2020, titled 'Female rats are resilient to the behavioral effects of maternal separation stress and exhibit stress-induced neurogenesis', by Lee, Koe, Ashokan, and Mitra, details below and correspondence reference [201220-002101] [210218-006595]:

I believe it is unethical to publicly comment on an ongoing-investigation. However, if the investigation is closed or there is no response by the authors during a reasonable period of time and no expression of concern was made on the article, then it is my duty to the academic community to raise the issue in the public domain. Please let me know the status of the current investigation.

In this particular incident, relevant to this article, any biologist with some knowledge of neurophysiology may understand the irregularities and invalidity of the article quite comprehensibly. Please see www.nanyangscandal.com for particulars of misconduct by Mitra and others.

I look forward to your reply.

Kind regards,

Mohamed Helmy

MD, PhD

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10 Jurong Lake Link, #15-39

Singapore 648131

----- Original Message -----

On Thursday, February 18, 2021 4:33 PM, Schulz, Christian (ELS-AMS) <c.schulz@cell.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. helmy,

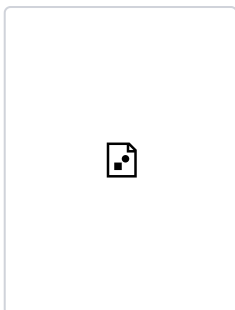
Thank you for sharing your concerns. Following your message from December to the editors of the *Heliyon Neuroscience* section we are already investigating this case and will get back to you.

With kind regards,

Christian Schulz



Dr. Christian Schulz | Cell Press | Lead Editor [Heliyon](#) | c.schulz@cell.com



The name *Heliyon* comes from “Helios,” the name for the Greek god of the sun. This

name gave us inspiration as we aspire to illuminate knowledge across a broad spectrum of research.

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From: Heliyon <info@heliyon.com>

Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 05:13

To: Schulz, Christian (ELS-AMS) <c.schulz@cell.com>

Subject: Re : Query publication [201220-002101] [210218-006595]

Dear Christian,

Hope you are well.

Dr Mohamed Helmy contacted regarding the published article in Heliyon entitled "Female rats are resilient to the behavioral effects of maternal separation stress and exhibit stress-induced neurogenesis" (HLY4753).

He mentioned a major finding of the article is a misinterpretation of erratic statistical method and/or reporting. Please refer to his email below.

Kindly look into this and advise him at helmy.m@protonmail.com

Thank you in advance.

Kind regards

Sharon Joy Lintao
Researcher Support
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From: Sharon Joy Lintao

Date: Thursday, February 18, 2021 04:02 AM GMT

Dear Dr Helmy,

Thank you for your email that has been forwarded to us regarding the published article in Heliyon entitled "Female rats are resilient to the behavioral effects of maternal separation stress and exhibit stress-induced neurogenesis."

I wish to inform you that I have contacted the Publisher about your concern and requested to contact you directly via email.

Please feel free to contact me if you need further assistance.

Kind regards

Sharon Joy Lintao
Researcher Support
ELSEVIER

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From: Sharon Joy Lintao

Date: Thursday, February 18, 2021 04:02 AM GMT

Dear Rhean,

I beg your pardon. What do you mean by 'we only accept publication for authors'? I am reporting putative research misconduct in a publication from your office. According to your guidelines you are required to investigate and correct the scientific record if necessary.

Please acknowledge and inform me of corrective action to be taken.

Kind regards,

Mohamed Helmy

MD, PhD

helmy.m@protonmail.com

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----- Original Message -----

On Wednesday, February 17, 2021 6:43 AM, Sci Tech Jrnls CS <JournalCustomerService-usa@elsevier.com> wrote:

Dear Mohamed Helmy,

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Please be advised that we only accept publication for authors.

You may contact them directly.

If I can be of further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.

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Date: Sunday, February 14, 2021 08:18 PM GMT

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From: Mohamed Helmy

Date: Sunday, February 14, 2021 08:18 PM GMT

Dear Heliyon,

I was wondering if you had time to consider my message below?

Kind regards,

Mohamed Helmy

MD, PhD

helmy.m@protonmail.com

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Singapore 648131

----- Original Message -----

On Sunday, December 20, 2020 2:54 PM, Sci Tech Jrnls CS <JournalCustomerService-usa@elsevier.com> wrote:

/span>

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----- Original Message -----

On Monday, February 15, 2021 4:17 AM, Helmy, M. <helmy.m@protonmail.com> wrote:

Dear Heliyon,

I was wondering if you had time to consider my message below?

Kind regards,

Mohamed Helmy

MD, PhD

helmy.m@protonmail.com

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10 Jurong Lake Link, #15-39

Singapore 648131

----- Original Message -----

On Sunday, December 20, 2020 2:54 PM, Sci Tech Jrnls CS <JournalCustomerService-usa@elsevier.com> wrote:

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Regards,

Elsevier Customer Service

From: Mohamed Helmy

Date: 20/12/2020 06.54 AM

Dear Professor Brattico, Professor Pluth, and Professor Crusio,

Regarding the article published in *Heliyon* [1] in 2020, titled 'Female rats are resilient to the behavioral effects of maternal separation stress and exhibit stress-

induced neurogenesis', by Lee, Koe, Ashokan, and Mitra:

1. **A major finding of the article is a misinterpretation of erratic statistical method and/or reporting:**
 - a. In [1], page 2 it states: "...Inter-group differences for behavioral and dendritic parameters were analyzed using an independent sample t-test. An analysis of variance was used for analyzing data for neurogenesis, with dentate gyrus of ventral/dorsal hippocampus serving as within-subject and experimental treatment serving as a between-subject source of variance...". **What is the justification for analyzing neurogenesis data differently to other tests in the same experiment, given that variables are equal?**
 - b. Subsequently, "...An analysis of variance was conducted with [control or AFR] or [maternally separated or MS] as a between-subject source of variance and dorsal or ventral hippocampal aspect of the dentate gyrus as a within-subject source of variance. Experimental treatment significantly affected dentate gyrus neurogenesis...Neurogenesis was not significantly different between dentate gyrus in dorsal and ventral hippocampus...Similarly, interaction between experimental treatment and brain regions did not reach statistical significance...Thus, maternal separation increased neurogenesis in the dentate gyrus..." emphasis added, [1], page 3. **Did maternal separation have a significant effector a main effector hippocampal neurogenesis?** Whether maternal separation significantly increased neurogenesis in hippocampus or not, this is not represented in Figure 3 with a p value or otherwise above the data as was done in Figures 1. and 2. **May the statistical method be clarified and significance representation in Figures be corrected to match the text?**
2. Given the vital roles of amygdala and neurostructural plasticity in fear processing and the stress response, and the understudied nature of gender dimorphism of the same, it is confusing that a large number of **reference citations in the article [1] are incorrect, misleading, or faulty**, for example:
 - a. "...chronic stressors during adulthood cause a long-lasting dendritic expansion in principal neurons of the basolateral amygdala (BLA) in males [17]..." [1], page 1. The reference [17] is probably a conference abstract and links to it are faulty, they do not lead to the material. **May the reference to the conference abstract be corrected?** It would be interesting to know why it was necessary to refer to the conference abstract cited in the presence of abundant publications on long-lasting dendritic expansion of basolateral amygdala neurons after various forms of stress in adulthood including chronic stress [3-10].
 - b. "...This is in agreement with earlier reports showing a lack of angiogenesis in female rodents after exposure to chronic stressors in adulthood [11, 12, 21]..." [1], page 3. **None of the references [11, 12, 21] support the claim that there is a 'lack' or even attenuated angiogenesis in female rodents after exposure to stress, may the citations in [1] be verified?** To support this statement I recommend [14] and to balance it as well as to address opposing findings in neuroplasticity [15] and perhaps [16,17].

3. Regarding the representative drawings and photomicrographs shown in [1]:
 - a. **May it be clarified from which experimental group photomicrographs in Figure 3.(C) are?**
 - b. **What is the justification for using a drawing tube, or *camera lucida*, to draw neurons by hand, then scan them, then digitally process them when the process could have been done using the same apparatus and software already used in the experiments as reported in [1]?**
4. About half the text in the Discussion is about a putative estrogenic neuroprotective effect, and estrus is discussed. However, no efforts were made to assess estrus in the experiment, which may highlight the robust nature of the findings. **Why was estrus not assessed in the experimental animals using methods well-established by the corresponding author's co-authors and collaborators [18,19]?**

Unfortunately the corresponding author did not respond to my query.

Kind regards,

Mohamed Helmy

MD, PhD

helmy.m@protonmail.com

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Singapore 648131

1. Lee YJ, Koe AS, Ashokan A, Mitra R. (2020). Female rats are resilient to the behavioral effects of maternal separation stress and exhibit stress-induced neurogenesis. *Heliyon* **6** (8):e04753-e04753. doi:10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e04753
17. Vyas A, Mitra R, Chattarji S. (2003). Enhanced anxiety and hypertrophy in basolateral amygdala neurons following chronic stress in rats. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* **985** (1):554-555. doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.2003.tb07127.x
3. Cui H, Sakamoto H, Higashi S, Kawata M. (2008). Effects of single-prolonged stress on neurons and their afferent inputs in the amygdala. *Neuroscience* **152** (3):703-712. doi:[10.1016/j.neuroscience.2007.12.028](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroscience.2007.12.028)
4. Heinrichs SC, Leite-Morris KA, Guy MD, Goldberg LR, Young AJ, Kaplan GB. (2013). Dendritic structural plasticity in the basolateral amygdala after fear conditioning and its extinction in mice. *Behav. Brain Res.* **248**:80-84. doi:[10.1016/j.bbr.2013.03.048](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbr.2013.03.048)
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9. Wang Y-C, Ho U-C, Ko M-C, Liao C-C, Lee L-J. (2012). Differential neuronal changes in medial prefrontal cortex, basolateral amygdala and nucleus accumbens after postweaning social isolation. *Brain Structure and Function* **217** (2):337-351.
10. Adamec R, Hebert M, Blundell J, Mervis RF. (2012). Dendritic morphology of amygdala and hippocampal neurons in more and less predator stress responsive rats and more and less spontaneously anxious handled controls. *Behav. Brain Res.* **226** (1):133-146. doi:[10.1016/j.bbr.2011.09.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbr.2011.09.009)
11. Farinetti A, Aspesi D, Marraudino M, Marzola E, Amianto F, Abbate-Daga G, Gotti S. (2020). Sexually dimorphic behavioral effects of maternal separation in anorexic rats. *Developmental Psychobiology* **62** (3):297-309. doi:[10.1002/dev.21909](https://doi.org/10.1002/dev.21909)

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Date: Thursday, February 18, 2021 04:02 AM GMT

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From: Sharon Joy Lintao

Date: Thursday, February 18, 2021 04:02 AM GMT

Dear Heliyon,

I was wondering if you had time to consider my message below?

Kind regards,

Mohamed Helmy

MD, PhD

helmy.m@protonmail.com

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10 Jurong Lake Link, #15-39

Singapore 648131

----- Original Message -----

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