

PLoS ONE Accepted a Manuscript without Evaluation from any External Reviewer

An article [1] published on PLoS ONE appears to have been accepted without the evaluation of any external reviewer.

The authors of the article [1] opted to make the review records openly accessible, which allows us to understand how the decision to accept this manuscript was made.

According to the review records, this article [1] was submitted on April 13, 2026, and was handled by the academic editor Muhammad Luqman with University of Jinan, China. Luqman issued the first decision on May 17, 2026, about a month after the submission. In his decision letter, Luqman invited the authors to submit a revised version of the manuscript, addressing the points raised during the review process. Luqman provided his own additional comments on the manuscript alongside the decision letter; however, no reviewer's feedback was provided with the decision letter.

The response [2] from the authors, submitted on June 7, 2026, confirmed that no evaluation by any external reviewer was provided with Luqman's decision letter.

This may violate the policy of the publisher, who states that "PLOS One, PLOS Climate, PLOS Global Public Health, PLOS Mental Health, and PLOS Water: Manuscripts must be evaluated by at least one external reviewer (preferably two) before acceptance." [3]

The 5GH Team finds no connection between the author group and the academic editor, although this can not rule out the conflict of interest between them. The Team is discussing this matter with the publication ethics team at PLoS to reach a proper resolution.

[1] 10.1371/journal.pone.0355398

[2] Response from the authors (access on August 4, 2026)

[3] Initial evaluation of manuscripts

(<https://explore.plos.org/editor-resources/manuscript-evaluation?hsCtaAttrib=205562974870>, access on August 4, 2026)

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