

Review Article

Risk of publication in worthless journals

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ABSTRACT

Implementing research and publishing results is a crucial for a professional development, scientific communication and collaboration of any academicians, scholars, and researchers in science around the world. The timely dissemination of knowledge and scientific information in the global scientific community helps the development of science and worldwide recognition. The researchers working on scientific community cannot appreciate the value of evidence generated without publishing their work in right and quality journals. Therefore, authors should be careful about predatory or fake journals/publishers for communicating their scientific works. The objective of this study is to raise awareness on predatory or fake publishers/journals and of their dishonest publishing practices. In general, the predatory journal publishes without peer review and true editorial board, often publish mediocre or even worthless papers on charging high publication cost, citing fake and non-existing impact factors and mostly focused on private business motives. On the other hand, publishing in a high impact quality journals undoubtedly enhances the future career prospects, communication ability of authors and deliver concise research messages in the scientific field. Researcher of various disciplines and academic experience should aware with the lists of predatory journals/publishers which are available on Beall's list in internet before publishing any research articles. Therefore, publishing in predatory/fake journals not only spoil or degrade academic reputations but also waste the time, resources and research message too.

Keywords: Predatory journals, fake impact factors, publication, academic career

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INTRODUCTION

The priority for publication should be given in those journals which are owned by Universities, Government Research Organizations, Associations of university presses and well established companies (IEEE, ACM, Elsevier, Springer, Routledge, Wiley, Emerald Taylor and Francis etc.). The journals associated with universities or learned societies such as MIT Press, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge University Press, or the American Physical Society, Royal Society of Chemistry, etc., are prominent publishers. Publication should be avoided in those journals which are owned by unregistered societies/associations or private publishers. The publishers who registered in Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) is considered good to publish. Selection of non profit academic publishers and open access publishers is equally important. The journals managed by INASP and African Journals Online (AJOL) are more trusted journals. The authors can judge the quality of journals through their JPPS criteria (The Journal Publishing Practices and Standards) (<https://www.journalquality.info/en/>).

There are many websites on the Internet that are an excellent source of additional information on predatory journals and reputable journals reviewed by experts. Betz (2016) reported about a comprehensive listing of predatory journals with commentaries about the fraudulent publishers that are available in scholarly open access journals developed by Dr. Jeffrey Beall (<https://scholarlyoa.com/>). This list provides the information about the fake journals/publishers and their steady growth rate since 2010 (Beall, 2013). Elliott (2012) reported about the set criteria for categorizing predatory publications based on two policy statements -the COPE code of conduct for journal publishers and the principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing from World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA). Professionally, articles published in predatory journals are not only indexed in any reputable bibliographic database such as Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) and PubMed, Journal Citation Reports (JCR) and Scopus but also disappear into the ether space created by fraudulent publishers (Betz, 2016). Unfortunately, the pernicious consequences of predatory publishers are numerous, anywhere and long-lasting. This means that it is difficult and impossible to correct these situations because they have a doi (Digital Object Identifier) number. Fortunately, future writers are learning the very detrimental consequences of publishing articles by predatory publishers. Unknowingly authors pay the “publication costs” to have their articles published and freely accessible to readers (Betz, 2016). There is always risk that the predatory or fake publishers can remove or stop their websites and can delete journal articles at any time. The authors suffer both personally and professionally.

The predatory publishers are different from mainstream journals because they charge high fees to publish the articles, and don't follow any of the quality assurance processes expected and followed in academic publications. The article processing/publication cost (APC) for predatory journals range from \$8 to \$2,819 (Xia *et al.*, 2017). Most journals charge local currencies for domestic authors while asking others to pay with US dollars, Euros, or other currency - usually at a higher rate. Some journals offer a fast track publication option if authors are willing to pay an additional APC with excessive fees, in addition to their regular APC. For example, one journal charges 2,000 Indian rupees for a seven-page paper, plus 400

Indian rupees or \$15 for each additional page. Another set a standard rate of 1,000 Indian rupees for an article with up to two coauthors (Xia *et al.*, 2017). For each additional author, an extra 300 Indian rupees are required. A few journals claim not to charge an APC, but instead ask authors to make a monetary donation or purchase a subscription (Xia *et al.*, 2017). Although predatory journals claim that they can be considered as peer-reviewed and that they can mimic the structure of legitimate journals, they publish all or most received materials without an external review and do not follow standard policies advocated by organizations such as the WAME, COPE, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) and the Council of Science Editors (CSE) regarding issues such as archiving of journal content, management of potential conflicts of interest, handling of errata, and transparency of journal processes and policies including fees (Laine, 2017). The criteria to identify predatory open access publishing are that they are accepting articles quickly with little or no peer review or quality control (Stratford, 2012), aggressively campaigning for academics to submit articles or serve on editorial boards (Butler, 2013), listing academics as members of editorial boards without their permission (Elliott, 2012), appointing fake academics to editorial boards (Neumann, 2012), mimicking the name or web site style of more established journals (Kolata, 2013), making misleading claims about the publishing operation such as a false location (Elliott, 2012) and citing fake and non-existing impact factors (Beall, 2014). Fake journals exhibit very poor quality and unprofessional copyediting. Some articles published in these journals are full of spelling and content errors (Mehrpour & Khajavi, 2014). Peer review is a process that provides a trusted form of scientific communication. The length of the evaluation process depends on the response of the judges. It is controversial how fake journals can guarantee up to two weeks to check when there is no place in reputable journals (Mehrpour & Khajavi, 2014). The fake journals/publishers have no or very short peer-review process, publish the papers without any revision on the fake sites. There is no evidence of an editorial board to review the articles. There is no mention of a peer review process or basic submission requirements. Moreover, some predatory journals/publishers keep DOAJ in their website so authors should be careful to check the real information by searching their name and ISSN number in search box of DOAJ website (<https://doaj.org>).

Through tracing the Internet Protocol (IP) addresses of journal editors and the location of their bank accounts, Bohannon (2013) found that many of the journals accepting fake articles that were based in developing countries, especially in South Asia. Predatory publisher usually emailed to authors. In its spam email or on its website, the publisher falsely claims one or more of its journals have actual (Thomson-Reuters) impact factors, Index Copernicus Value, or advertises impact factors assigned by fake "impact factor" services, or it uses some made up measure (e.g. view factor), feigning/claiming an exaggerated international standing. Several misleading metrics and fake impact factors have appeared which damage the prestige of scholarly journals. Fake impact factors are produced by companies not affiliated with Journal Citation Reports. The Impact Factor (JIF) of an academic journal is an indicator of the impact of a journal with respect to the quantity of scholarly research published in that journal. The Journal Citation Reports (JCR) is an annual publication released by Clarivate Analytics (formerly Thomson Reuters and ISI) that publishes the JIF for more than 10,000 academic journals. It is necessary to check whether journals are indexed across all Clarivate Analytics databases by searching the full-journal title or the ISSN numbers. Predatory journals have not been indexed by Journal Citation Reports or SJR (SCImago Journal Rank), which indicates the scholarly inferiority of the journals. Many predatory journals are

claiming that they are indexed by JCR master list, while they are not. Visit JCR website and check real information (<http://ipscience-help.thomsonreuters.com/incitesLiveJCR/8275-TRS.html>). The journals included in Scopus are considered good for publication. Authors should check whether journals are included in SJR and Scopus.

Universities, colleges and even community colleges insist that faculty publish research papers and the more papers are better. The academic teachers and schools they teach at rely on these publications to strengthen their reputation, and with an oversupply of PhD's vying for jobs, the career remains balanced. The academic community is under tremendous pressure to publish. This pressure is compounded by high rejection rates at many journals. Many young and inexperienced researchers, along with well-known researchers, publish more papers to build their resumes and CVs to find a job, grants and promotions. New scholars from developing countries are said to be especially at risk of being misled by predatory practices (Kearney, 2015; Xia *et al.*, 2014). Researchers in developing countries have become the favorite target of these journals and many have been trapped. A longitudinal study (an estimated three-quarters of authors were from Asia and Africa) of article volumes and publishing market characteristics estimated 8000 active predatory journals, with total articles increasing from 53,000 in 2010 to 420,000 in 2014 (Shen & Pjork, 2015). In terms of authors' locations, who published in predatory journals, South Asian countries topped the list with 34.7%, followed by the rest of Asia (25.6%) and Africa (16.4%) respectively (Shen & Pjork, 2015). Most predatory journals are published in developing countries, South Asia particularly in India and Pakistan (Ameen, 2017; Pulla, 2016) and few African countries are also ranks high on the list.

CONCLUSION

Earlier evidences suggested that predatory journals/publications hampered severely to the researchers and scholars from developing countries. Because of several reasons, scientific communities from this world are forced to publish their articles in fake journals so there is a strong need and collaboration among the researchers to battle this unprofessional business. Researchers should learn how to recognize predatory journals and avoid submitting work to these unscrupulous outlets. Research institutions should provide incentives for their researchers to publish in legal journals. In order to save long run academic integrity, true and reliable information regarding the predatory journals are utmost among the scientific world to publish but not to perish.

Author Contributions

JS, SS, KPT and MPT wrote this article.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflicts of interest.

Declaration: The purpose of this article is to create awareness about fake journals/publishers but not to harm any journals/publishers which are genuine.

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