

Authors beware! Predatory publishing is worthless

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Today, the field of academic publishing is in big trouble due to the growing number of unethical publications (Shrestha et al., 2018a). The main aim of this article is to make the authors aware of predatory publishing. A predatory publisher is an opportunistic publishing platform that exploits the academic need to publish and focuses solely on monetary business for those using their services (O'Donnell, 2020). Jeffrey Beall, a scholarly librarian at the University of Colorado, first coined the term predatory publishers in *Nature* in 2012 (Beall, 2012). Since then, the visibility and awareness of predatory journals has increased rapidly. Predatory publishers promise that the articles submitted will be published in a very short period of time within a week or so. They send spam emails to authors on a daily basis, asking them to submit their manuscripts. Predatory publishers were known to have placed a logo in their emails from a well-established, reputable company when they sent out a request for papers. The publication fee is also not seen publicly on the website. If a journal demands a submission fee before the article is published, it may be a predatory journal. Predatory journals include academics in their editorial team without their permission (Elliott, 2012; Neumann, 2012). Predatory publishers frequently list multiple journals with the same editor-in-chief. Sometime predatory journals can build fake scholars or list scholars without their permission. Predatory journals' reviewers are often junior researchers from developing countries (Kramer, 2020). They are trying to make the titles of their journals or website names identical to authentic and famous journals (Kolata, 2013). They use terms like International; British, European, American, New, etc. in their journal titles. Predatory publishers establish false contact locations (Elliott, 2012). Often predatory journals claim that their offices are in one country, while contact details will be in another. The links and telephone numbers given on the website do not work. Many predatory publishers claim to be headquartered in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada or Australia but actually originate from Pakistan, India or Nigeria (Naidu and Dell, 2019). Fake journals are lazy in editing and removing mistakes so that they are full of grammatical errors (Mehrpour and Khajavi, 2014). TC (Technical committee)-editing errors are noticeable in predatory journals. They publish several issues per volume and each issue appears to be covered by the number of articles. Many predatory journals only published one or two volumes and then either ceased publishing or published fewer issues and articles. Many predatory journals would publish any articles sent to them. Predatory journals simply accept submissions, do not, or do less peer review (Stratford, 2012). They publish without peer review process.

Predatory journals claim that they have (Thomson-Reuters) impact factors, Scopus, Index Copernicus Value, which pretend to have very good features, but cannot be found in the real site of credible metrics. The predatory journals often have deceptive and bogus metrics (<https://predatoryjournals.com/metrics>). The Index Copernicus Value is advertised on their

website. Predatory journals also seek to confuse researchers by presenting metric names that are very close to actual metrics. Predatory publishers keep fake metrics on their website including CiteFactor, Global Impact Factor, Journals Impact Factor (JIFACTOR), Science Impact Factor, Scientific Journal Impact Factor, SCIJOURNAL.ORG (International Scientific Institute), Universal Impact factor, Directory of Journal Quality Factor and Scientific Indexing Services (SIS).

Researchers should learn how to identify predatory journals and stop applying their research output to such disreputable outlets (Shrestha et al., 2018b). Elliott (2012) mentioned that the COPE code of conduct should act as a guideline for determining whether it is a genuine or a false article. Likewise, the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), INSAP (<https://www.inasp.info>), and Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) have good transparency principles and protocols to be followed for publication. To be a good journal it must have articles with particular Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) provided by crossref (<https://www.crossref.org>), International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), Copyright, renowned editorial team, and also should be member of an Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA), and International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers (STM). It should also have clear usage rights e.g. Creative Commons License (CC by License). DOAJ journals indicate that they meet the criteria of peer review and maintain the basic standards of publishing as required. If the journal is not listed in the DOAJ, it should give rise to doubt in the author's mind and should double check before the submission of articles (Agrawal, 2020). The National Library of Medicine (NLM) in Bethesda offers access to bibliographic data not only for the journals but also for books, audiovisuals, computer software programs, and electronic resources, among other items. If the NLM Catalog mentions “Not currently indexed for MEDLINE,” it means that the journal may be questionable (Agrawal, 2020). The reputed indices are Clarivate Analytics Web of Science, the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, Scopus, the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals (Level 2) (Naidu and Dell, 2019). The name of real publishers are Nature, De Gruyter, BioMed Central, Emerald publishing, hindwai, Springer Nature, AIMS Press, Informa Healthcare, Cambridge University Press, Elsevier, Wolters Kluwer, Sage Publications, Wiley, Brill, F1000 Research Ltd, CABI, CSIRO Publishing, Taylor and Francis, Bentham Science, Plos one, Frontiers, PeerJ, MDPI, Universities and colleges, registered societies, Oxford University Press, MIT press and University of Chicago Press. The journals and publishers registered with COPE are genuine. The major reputed websites like INSAP, LIBER, Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP), Scientific Technical Medical Journal (STM), United Kingdom Serials Group (UKSG) and individual publishers in particular, recommended that the authors review the history of the journal very carefully and then apply for publication of the paper. The Think. Check. Submit. website (<https://thinkchecksubmit.org>) provides helpful guidance. In addition, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA), and World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) created the Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing. These criteria are helpful for assessing a journal.

Predatory publishing may happen if the author is unfamiliar with the field of the journal, new to research/publishing in general, feels pressure to publish (for tenure, promotion, and retention considerations) and feels pressure to publish quickly. Researchers in developing countries are more likely to publish in predatory journals (Xia et al., 2015). Young scholars (MS, PhD. candidates) from universities and young researchers from research organizations are trying to publish in predatory journals because of the compulsion to be published in a limited time due to the requirement of their degree, job promotion etc. They want to publish a large number of papers in a very short period to improve their academic prestige or to increase the impact of their curriculum vitae. Unethical publications have increased since the submission process of co-authors who do not have enough ideas about predatory publishing and the key authors display a lack of concern in selecting appropriate journals. The authors have to face a variety of problems if they have published in predatory journals. The journal's bad reputation may be extended to the authors, their institutions, or even the entire field or discipline. Predatory or deceptive journals can serve as an outlet for plagiarized material or fabricated results. Works of authors could disappear if the predatory publisher goes out of business. Nicoll and Chinn (2015) found that if the authors wish to delete their articles from predatory journals after publication, they either ask to pay the withdrawal fee or refuse to return the article. It should be remembered that we should never attempt to publish our articles in predatory journals, nor should we quote any articles from predatory journals, as this can undermine the credibility of our own paper. It's going to be worthless for both our carrier and portfolio. Any funding agency, company, research institution, academic institution, etc. shall assess the research according to its validity and quality (Smith, 2006).

Predatory journals are one of the biggest threats to the reputation of academic publishing (Shrestha et al., 2020). Predatory publishing undermines the credibility of academic research. To discourage the growth of predatory publishing, authors should not publish in, or cite articles published in, predatory journals, even if an individual study appears to be credible. If researchers cite articles in scientifically dubious journals, their credibility could suffer as much harm as if they were to be authors of these publications (Severin and Low, 2019). Institutions should be discouraged from publishing in unethical journals by making the criterion for publishing in legitimate journals indexed in web of science's Journal Citation Reports (JCR, Clarivate Analytics, formerly Thomson-Reuters) or other popular scientific databases such as Scopus, DOAJ, PubMed, Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), PubMed Central, and MEDLINE (Shrestha et al., 2018a). As predatory journals were believed not to be indexed in well-known academic search engines and citation repositories, it was believed that their publications would rarely be cited or implemented in practice by other academics. Publishing in predatory journals not only damages or degrades academic reputations but also consumes energy, money and research message. We should therefore ensure that we publish papers that meet the highest standards of scientific integrity.

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