

Predatory Journals

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Learning Outcomes

After attending this lecture the learner will be able to;

- Enlist the features of Predatory Publishers
- Check the target journal on the basis of Warning Signals
- Identify predatory publishers
- Select the authentic journal for publication

Definition

- **Journals exist solely for profit without any commitment to publication ethics or integrity of any kind.**
- Jeffrey Beall, an American academic university librarian, first used the term ‘predatory’ in the context of publishers and journals exploiting the author-pays business model of online ‘gold’ open-access publishing.

Features of Predatory Publishers

- Predatory publishers may cheat authors, their funders, and institutions through charging publishing-related fees without providing the expected standard services.
- Lack the usual features of editorial oversight and transparent policies and operating procedures.
- Predatory publishing grew with the emergence of online publishing.

Why do academics publish in such journals?

- In research environments, there is usually more value for quantity over quality.
- Hiring and promotion of academics is based largely on their number of publications.
- Predatory journals has helped many pseudo-researchers to prosper.
- Unable to identify Predatory Journals

What is the harm caused by predatory journals?

- Predatory and low-quality journals corrupt the literature.
- Medical science has been particularly hit hard, with journals now devoted to unscientific medicine.
- “Peer review is at the heart of academic evaluation. Publishing without peer review [while pretending that peer review was done] gives poor and mediocre academics a chance for jobs and promotions which should go to better qualified researchers.” (Prof. Sunil Mukhi, J.C. Bose Fellow and Chair, Physics Programme, IISER Pune.)

Features of Predatory Journals

- The editor and/or review board members do not have **academic expertise in the journal's field.**
- Provides insufficient information about author fees, and later sending an **unanticipated 'surprise' invoice,**
- No proper indexing.
- The name of a journal is unrelated with the journal's mission.
- The name of a journal **does not adequately reflect its origin.**
- The poorly maintained websites, including **dead links,** prominent misspellings and grammatical errors on the website.

- **Unauthorized use of licensed images** on their website, without permission or licensing from the copyright owners.
- **Re-publish papers** already published in other venues/outlets without providing appropriate credits.
- Use boastful language claiming to be a **'leading publisher'**.
- Provide minimal or **no copy editing or proofreading** of submissions.
- Publish papers that are not academic at all, e.g. essays by lay people, polemical editorials, or pseudo-science.
- 'contact us' page only includes an email address, **does not reveal its location.**

- The publisher publishes journals that are **excessively broad** or combine two or more fields not normally treated together (e.g. International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology) in order to attract more articles and gain more revenue from author fees.
- The **guarantee of acceptance** and/or the promise of very **fast publication** times (eg, within one week or 48 hours).
- The lack of quality peer review of articles by experts in the field.
- **Direct approach** to authors for publication.

Checklist

1. Do you or your colleagues know the journal?
2. Can you easily identify and contact the publisher?
3. Is the journal clear about the type of peer review it uses?
4. Are articles indexed in services that you use?
5. Is it clear what fees will be charged?
6. Do you recognise the editorial board?
7. Is the publisher a member of a recognised industry initiative (COPE, DOAJ, OASPA)?

Warning signs of fake journals

1. Website: misleading or false information (eg, indexing, metrics, membership of scholarly publishing organisations), lacks an ISSN or duplicate ISSN, mimics another journal/publisher's site, or has no past or recent journal content.
2. Name of journal: The journal name is the same as or easily confused with that of another; scope, or association.
3. Peer review process: Peer review and peer review process and model are not mentioned, or manuscript acceptance or a very short peer review time is guaranteed.
4. Ownership and management: Information is missing, unclear, misleading, or false.
5. Governing body: Information on the editorial board is missing, misleading, false, or inappropriate for the journal; full names and affiliations of editorial board members are missing.

6. Editorial team/contact information: missing, the editor-in-chief is also the owner/publisher, or editor of many other journals of unrelated fields.
7. Copyright and licensing: Policies and notices of copyright are missing or unclear.
8. Author fees: are revealed only in the acceptance letter, as a condition of acceptance.
9. Process for identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct: Policy missing.
10. Publication ethics: There are no policies on publishing ethics.
11. Publishing schedule: not indicated and/or appears erratic from the available journal content.

12. Access: The way(s) in which content is available is not stated, and in some cases listed articles are not available at all.

13. Archiving: There is no electronic backup and preservation of access to journal content (despite such claims).

14. Revenue sources: Business models, business partnerships/agreements, or revenue sources are not stated; publishing fees or waiver status are linked to editorial decision making.

15. Advertising: Advertising policy is not given, or advertisements are linked to editorial decision making or are integrated with published content.

16. Direct marketing: Direct marketing is obtrusive and gives misleading or false information.

General Awareness

- a) Educate researchers, supervisors, librarians, and administrators
- b) Identify trustworthy journals through the ‘Think.Check.Submit.’ campaign.
<https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
- c) Create and continually update discipline-specific journal whitelists/safe lists using clear criteria,
- d) Verify spam invitations, made by email, text message, or telephone call, to submit manuscripts or attend conferences. Consider using the DNS Checker to check the Internet Protocol of suspected spam. (<https://dnschecker.org/ip-blacklist-checker.php>)
- e) Check journal names, ISSN codes, and URLs are real ones; verify any claimed metrics, indexed status, and organisational membership. Check that researcher profiles on institutional websites or LinkedIn mention claimed editorship of journals.
- f) Read a sample of archived articles from potential target journals to check quality.
- g) Beware of paying author fees, demanded as a condition of acceptance, without checking what they are for, and assigning copyright to a predatory journal.

Demand manuscript withdrawal if payment has not yet been made and/or copyright has not yet been assigned as a condition of acceptance.

Funders and Institutions

- a) Discourage publication and citation of articles in predatory journals.
- b) Exercise caution in the use of journal metrics during research assessments and staff appraisals. Consider using peer review, as well as the following guidelines and recommendations:
 - i) San Francisco **Declaration On Research Assessment** (DORA). (<https://sfdora.org/>)
 - ii) Leiden manifesto for research metrics. (<https://www.leidenmanifesto.org/>)
 - iii) The metric tide. (<https://responsiblemetrics.org/the-metric-tide/>)
 - iv) The Hong Kong principles for assessing researchers: Fostering research integrity. (<https://osf.io/m9abx/>)

Links for List of Predatory Publishers

- <https://app.lib.uliege.be/compass-to-publish/test>
- <https://ugccare.unipune.ac.in/Apps1/Home/Index>

Thanks