

Short Communication

The Menace of Predatory Journals

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1. What is a predatory journal?

Authors often receive emails with “call for papers” or “rapid publication in indexed international journal” subject lines. The links provided in such emails lead to obscure journal homepp. which leave a naive author amazed at the opportunity to get their work published so easily or an experienced author completely wary. These are “predatory journals.” The term was first used in the year 2008, when Jeffrey Beall, a librarian with the University of Colorado, USA listed poor-quality open-access publishing houses and their journals in his “Beall’s list” and used the term to identify them [1]. These journals bypass the rigorous peer-review process of articles, making it a mere eye-wash and offer quick open-access publication to the authors at a bearable cost [2].

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2. What are the perils of publishing with predatory journals? (Figure 1)

While a new researcher/author may be unaware of their existence and be lured by the ease of publication with these journals, some authors with weak ethical principles purposefully publish with these journals to enhance their curriculum vitae and advance their career [3]. The practice, in any case, has become a money minting business for such publishers at the cost of credibility of both the research and the researcher. It jeopardizes the sanctity of research process, makes a waste of the resources of funding agencies and other stake holders, and puts the career of researchers at risk. Moreover, such poorly reviewed works dilute the contribution of genuine work to advancement of science and discovery. The nuisance of plagiarism, table research, conflicts of interest, etc. all thrive under the umbrella of predatory journals.

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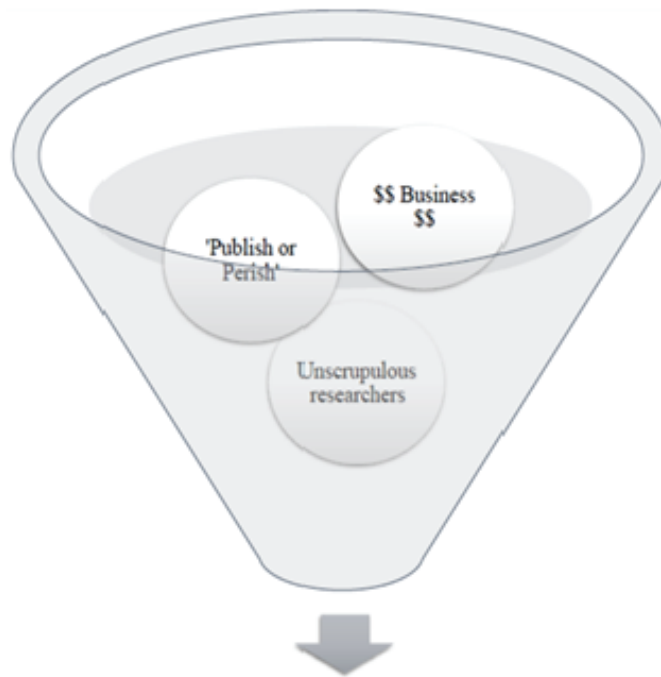


Figure 1: Predatory Publication Practices.

3. How does one identify a predatory journal? (Figure 2)



Figure 2

It is important that researchers be vigilant and not fall prey to the honey trap laid down by these illegitimate journals. “Call for papers” from the editors of these journals often flood inboxes. Their websites may appear very attractive. But careful inspection reveals

obscure indexing databases, unimpressive editorial boards, absent online manuscript submission system, rapid review and publication promise, and of course, unclear article processing method, including publishing charges. Once the manuscript is submitted, it may be accepted and published in no time, many a times without a review, in sharp contrast to the desk rejection often met with legitimate journals. The themes of papers published by these journals may often be irrelevant to the scope of the journal cited on their websites. Examination of these papers reveals their paucity of scientific and language critique [2–5].

4. What pushes authors toward predatory journals? (Figure 1)

Predatory journals thrive mainly because of paucity of opportunities available to a new researcher, and paucity of quality in the work.

Budding researchers often face desk rejection because of their affiliation to the lesser-known universities and lesser-known nations. They end up spending more time in finding appropriate journal, redoing work according to journals' requirements and in the submission- resubmission process, etc. than they actually spent in doing the work and writing the manuscript. While facing the pressure of time to deliver their research output (publications) in their profession, paper publication becomes an arduous task. And “predatory journals” ease it!

The other aspect pertains to the quality of work presented in the paper. Good indexed journals subject manuscripts to stringent scrutiny and only few manuscripts meet those standards. And then there is “fabricated” research data as well that gets exposed during the process. However, every researcher would like their work to see the light of day and that the work be counted. Again, “predatory journals” are here to help!

Of course, there are also those researchers who fall into the trap of predatory journals because of sheer ignorance [3].

5. What can be done to do away with the predatory publishing practices?

Conveniently, if the predatory journals do not get their business, they will die their own death! While it is easier said than done, continuous efforts to create awareness about predatory publishing practices among researchers, funding agencies, and readers are required. Researchers must always uphold their integrity and commitment to

advancement of science in its truest sense. Editors and publishers must vow to abide by Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines. Legal action against the publishers as well as the authors may also be resorted to if such need arises. Researchers should be discouraged from including their predatory journal publications in their CVs, as such publications may be identified and discredited in career advancement, funding of such researchers may be restricted, etc. [2, 5].

It is in the best interest of science, researchers, and beneficiaries of research that the encroachment by these shady journals be curbed to preserve the sanctity and meaningfulness of research. It calls for our collective efforts to enforce the same.

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Competing Interests

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