

PREDATORY PUBLISHING

Predatory publishers are a growing phenomenon in the world of academic publishing. Predatory publishing generally refers to the systematic for-profit publication of purportedly scholarly content (in journals and articles, monographs, books, or conference proceedings) in a deceptive or fraudulent way and without any regard for quality assurance. Predatory publishers may cheat authors (and their funders and institutions) through charging publishing-related fees without providing the expected or industry standard services. Predatory publishers may also deceive academics into serving as editorial board members or peer reviewers. In short, fake scholarly publications lack the usual features of editorial oversight and transparent policies and operating procedures that are expected from legitimate peer-reviewed publications. It is widely recognized that the phenomenon of predatory publishing grew with the emergence of online publishing, coupled with a widespread academic climate of research evaluation linked to journal title prestige and journal-level metrics.

Some Characteristics of Predatory Publications

1. Hidden or unclear author fees,
2. The lack of quality peer review of articles by experts in the field,
3. The guarantee of acceptance and/or the promise of very fast publication times, e.g., within two weeks
4. Incomplete or misleading reporting of policies (including copyright and user licenses), processes, personnel, performance, and affiliations in the journal's website or correspondence,
5. Poor language usage (including poor grammar) and low production quality, both in the presentation of the journal's description and guidelines, and in some of the articles that are published,
6. The lack of ethics policies and need for ethics declarations, particularly related to animal and human studies, conflicts of interest, and study funding,
7. The lack of any corrections/retractions of articles,
8. The lack of ability for articles to be retrieved on an electronic search platform in perpetuity, or for articles to be retrieved at all despite being listed in a table of contents,

9. Commonly advertise false or misleading information and claim copyright of the articles but only erratically publish accepted content, if at all,
10. Fictitious rejection rate, a falsely created impact factor, false claims of indexing in real indexes or true claims of being indexed in bogus indexes, or the adoption of the imprimatur logo of a membership organization with a false claim of being a member in good standing.
11. A non-existent editor-in-Chief, who is non-identifiable or lacking in appropriate academic credentials, relevant employment, and/or relevant experience
12. The owner or publisher is also the editor-in-chief
13. Some journals have non-professional email addresses such as gmail.com and odd organizational mailing addresses such as PO Boxes.
14. Low amount of publishing fee which is affordable by most young researchers
15. Non-existent editorial boards to fraudulent claims that some legitimate scholars sit on a board, when in fact they may have never given their permission or actually been invited as editorial board members. Requests by scholars to withdraw their names from editorial board lists are generally either ignored or not acted upon.

Raising Awareness of Predatory Journals

Below are some suggested ways to tackle, avoid, and raise awareness of the problem of predatory journals.

- a) It is recommended that the university establishes departmental committees with the mandate of vetting journals and populating a list of credible and acceptable journals in their subject area. The list would then be reviewed and updated over time.
- b) Educate researchers, supervisors, librarians, and administrators in publishing literacy and about fake journals (see this list of warning signs based on the 16 Principles of transparency) <https://oaspa.org/principles-of-transparency-and-best-practice-in-scholarly-publishing/>
- c) Identify trustworthy journals through the ‘Think.Check.Submit.’ campaign. <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
- d) Create and continually update community and discipline-specific journal whitelists/safelists using clear criteria. Schools can develop their lists which can be

updated regularly. The lists can be domiciled on the School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension (SGSR&E) web page.

- e) Verify spam invitations, made by email, text message, or telephone calls, to submit manuscripts (e.g., research papers or invited reviews) or attend conferences. Consult ICT for suspected spam emails and consider using the DNS Checker to check the Internet Protocol of suspected spam. <https://dnschecker.org/ip-blacklist-checker.php>
- f) Check if journal names, ISSN codes, and URLs are real ones; verify any claimed metrics, indexed status, and organizational membership. Check that researcher profiles on institutional websites or LinkedIn mention claimed editorship of journals.
- g) Read a sample of archived articles from potential target journals to check quality. Avoid citing predatory journal articles and beware when performing systematic analysis of previous research.
- h) Beware of paying author fees, especially those that are suddenly 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.
- i) **Misleading Metrics** - In predatory publishing, the aspect of misleading metrics is a common occurrence. A curated list of the misleading metrics is found at <https://predatoryjournals.com/metrics/>.