

## HOW TO IDENTIFY PREDATORY JOURNAL

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### ABSTRACT

*After the invention and popularity of open access journals, the production of predatory journals began. Predatory journals use various methods to attract authors, such as sending emails and claiming fast publication with rare rejections. The quality of published articles in these journals is questionable due to a lack of peer review, which may endanger patients because clinicians rely on published research.*

*The purpose of this article was to inform authors about how to identify predatory journals and avoid publishing in them. This topic was searched on Google Scholar and PubMed to retrieve some information for the authors. Before submitting an article, an author should scrutinize the journal's website, editorial board, address or contact phone number, the scope of the journal, the subject of published articles, and read a few articles from the current or previous issue to ensure that the standards of articles are met.*

*It is critical to double-check registrations with DOAJ and COPE and to be indexed in reputable databases such as PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, Medline, and others. Viewing databases and registration sites should be used to verify all of the journal's claims. Beall's list of predatory journals may also be useful. To avoid wasting time and effort by publishing in predatory journals, authors should follow the suggestions in this article.*

**Key words:** *Predatory journal, fake journals, Publication Ethics, Editorial Policies, open access journals, deceptive journals.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Because publishing in journals is required by the medical and professional communities, there are far too many publications these days. Credit for these articles is used for faculty hiring, promotions, and in some cases, research grants for projects. Many researchers regard citations, h-index, and impact factors as important indicators of academic advancement, and as a result, they advocate for more publication.<sup>1</sup>

A new trend of Open Access journals publishing articles for free has begun. Publishing in these journals resulted in more citations because scientific literature was easily accessible to readers. The quick publication process appeals to educational faculty members who want to boost the number of published articles on their CV for credit. Because many academic institutions consider the number of published papers for promotions and incentives, researchers are more easily screwed

into these journals.<sup>1-4,7,9</sup>

After the popularity of concepts of Open Access (OA) journals, Predatory Journals have begun to emerge. The purpose of open access journals was to make research available to readers for free. Jeffrey Beall was the first to raise awareness of the issue and compile a list of questionable journals.<sup>9</sup> He created a list known as "Beall's List" (<http://scholarlyoa.com/>), of several hundred OA publications however, it was removed. Bartholomew elaborated on the reasons for this list removal and pointed out that the scholarly publishing sector failed to regulate itself, therefore, predatory journals evolved, multiplied, and prospered.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Predatory Journal*

The predatory journal seeks financial gain from researchers/academicians. It's a dubious publishing business strategy. They charge authors for publication but do not provide the necessary editorial and publishing services. Therefore, science and research suffer as publication standards deteriorate.<sup>4</sup>

New researchers lack publishing experience, and even experienced scholars may be unaware of predatory journals.<sup>2,4,7-8</sup> Scholars are convinced to publish with them. Many writers may be aware that the journal is of poor quality or even a counterfeit. Predatory publish-

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ers try to deceive new scholars from underdeveloped nations. Although the website is genuine, the content is not.

Authors must exercise extreme caution because all journals are constantly and strictly monitored. Anyone can discover a published manuscript that is unrelated to the journal's scope. Hundreds of papers that had been published in prestigious journals were retracted a few years ago.<sup>11</sup> Predatory journals lack the scholarly publishing community's standards and procedures for reviewing which is necessary for the published work's standards. These standards include needed publishing modifications, plagiarism detection, and research ethics evaluation. Authorship statements to exclude any guest authors, funding details, address allegations of misconduct, and conflict of interest disclosures are also mandatory.

"The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), and the Council of Science Editors (CSE) each have standards of conduct/professionalism that help editors understand their responsibilities."<sup>12,13</sup>

### **Identification of predatory journal**

The following are some key characteristics that can aid in the identification of these journals. The summary is given in table 1, always start searching from the website and continue with the given sequence to avoid missing any features.<sup>4,7</sup>

#### **Websites**

These publications create a refined website to mimic prominent journals, and their names may be close to the names of prestigious journals. When registration of a genuine journal website expires, then these websites may be hijacked for building a site that looks exactly like the original journal. The names of Predatory journals may be nonspecific, containing adjectives like American, International, Global, and so on. They lack a scope statement or specific subject.<sup>14,15</sup>

#### **Editorial Board**

The editorial board members may be phony. Publishers search for members for their editorial board and randomly send email invitations to a lot of researchers, without setting any requirements for selection. The editor's or editorial board's contact information may be unavailable or incomplete on the journal's website.<sup>13-16</sup> There Editorial Board members may be unaware that are participating in running a predatory journal. There is a possibility of a bogus editorial staff, and the listed names may be unaware that their names have been listed on the editorial board.

#### **Online submission system**

The original journal will accept the manuscript via a manuscript submission tab on their website, whereas predatory journals will not have such an option and

will ask authors to mail their manuscript.<sup>14-16</sup>

### **Process of rapid review**

Researchers frequently receive solicitations from these journals for the submission of their work. Predatory journals claim to have a fast review system and can take as little as 72 hours from submission to acceptance. This is a red flag because the review and comprehensive evaluation cannot be completed in such a short time. Authentic journals contact authors on a case-by-case basis but never guarantee acceptance.<sup>4,15,16</sup>

### **Misleading metric/ impact factors**

These journals show exaggerated phony impact factors, generated by fictitious businesses to lure authors. Their indexing information is misleading just to entice academics to their publications.<sup>17-18</sup>

Thomson Reuters' Journal Citation Reports® is the only authentic source of impact factors.

Bogus firms now create and license phony impact factors to OA journals, which are displayed on websites of predatory journals to deceive authors.

### **Advertisements**

Publishers use advertisements and emails to encourage authors to submit their work to these journals. Their e-mails from private email IDs may contain grammatical or spelling errors, and the author's work (recent or past) will be praised. These invitations may be irrelevant to the recipient's field of study, and primarily target authors from developing countries.<sup>1-5</sup>

### **Article-processing charges (APC)**

The article processing charges are not revealed at the time of submission but once accepted will bill the authors "without providing quality editorial or publishing services"<sup>2</sup>. Although the publication cost may not be discussed or conveyed to authors at the outset, it has been reported that authors have been charged a huge price after their work has been accepted, as they don't have traditional subscriptions to generate revenue.<sup>16,17</sup> They have a policy that papers submitted to these journals cannot be withdrawn.<sup>4,6</sup>

Authors can check the characteristics of predatory journals already described and some online tools may also help like

- 1 Despite its limitations, Beall's list is still a helpful tool for identifying predatory journals.<sup>2,3,20</sup>
- 2 Use a "Think Check Submit" checklist.<sup>8</sup> (think-checksubmit.org)
- 3 In the directory of open-access journals, look up the journal's name.<sup>21</sup>

Because all of these tools have flaws, authors should not rely solely on one.

**Consequences of publishing in predatory journals**

**Predispose of Academic deception or Misconduct**

Predatory journals ignore the moral practices established by COPE for the research publication, such as plagiarism screening, peer review, proofreading, and disclosures of conflict of interest. Their goal is to profit. As a result, both the publication and its credibility are regarded as dubious. Few authors deliberately publish in such journals having no peer review because they are aware that their low-quality papers will be rejected in a legitimate journal. In a roundabout way, these authors contribute to the growth of these journals.<sup>10,11</sup> The research papers published in predatory journals are

not accepted for credits because these are considered gray literature, preprint, and flawed.

**Archived content not available**

**Achieving**

Predatory journals falsely claimed to be registered in reputable databases such as Scopus and PubMed.

The content of these journals is not available on like CLOCKSS (Controlled Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe: A community-governed Archive) or PubMed Central, therefore it's impossible to track down an article once it's been published.<sup>4,11</sup>

Because the journals were established solely for business purposes, they are prone to discontinuing

TABLE1: SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF PREDATORY JOURNALS FOUND IN THE LITERATURE.

S. No	Criteria	Description
1	Contact information	Contact information (email, phone number, or address) provided is not valid. Use Non-official/professional email addresses (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.). The website frequently contains dead links
2	Advertisements of journals	Fast publication/peer review processes are guaranteed, as well as affordable submission fees.
3	Title and logo	These may be deceptive or mimic the original journal. The titles of journals are not the same as the goals and scope of the journals.
4	Suspicious Editorial Board	Editorial board may have fake sometimes times well-known authors' names without their consent.
5	Emails Address	Send email invitations from personal email IDs to a substantial number of people to request submissions.
6	Peer review process	The journal provides only a cursory or no peer review process
7	Submission system	Predatory journals have no manuscript submission tab on their web page and will ask authors to submit manuscripts through email
8	Indexing	As they claim, predatory journals will not be listed in any databases (PubMed, Medline, Web of Science, and others)
9	Metrics	Show dubious impact factors and metrics
10	Publishing ethics	There are no services for publishing ethics (reviewing of paper, needed editing, and indexing).
11	Scope of journal	The journal's scope is not specified and will be too broad, encompassing nearly all scientific disciplines.
12	Article-processing charges (APC)	APC is normally kept hidden and revealed once the paper got acceptance for publication.
13	Spelling errors and copy-editing	The articles have not been copyedited, therefore, typographical and grammatical mistakes are common. On the journal's website, such blunders are all too common.
14	Member of COPE/ OASPA?	Check membership of the journal in the following 1. COPE (the Committee on Publication and Ethics). 2. OASPA (Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association) OR indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

publication when profits fall or the financiers shift their focus elsewhere. It will result in the author's work being wasted.<sup>11,12</sup>

**Reliance on scientific literature is harmed**

Predatory journals jeopardize the trust and dependence of other researchers and readers, who may rely on these published works for healthcare procedures that injure patients.<sup>1,8</sup>

**CONCLUSION**

Authors should exercise extreme caution when selecting articles for citation, because if the cited paper is from a predatory journal, the credibility of the paper may be called into question. Few scholarly databases, such as Google Scholar, are unconcerned about including content from predatory journals.

To avoid publication in a predatory journal, the author should follow the steps outlined in this paper before submitting it to the desired journal. Verification of DOAJ and COPE registrations, as well as inclusion in reputable databases (such as Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, Medline, and so on), should be done through their official websites rather than relying on the journal's claims. Reading a few articles from the current or previous issue will help to assess the standards of articles in that journal.

In terms of time and effort, screening all journals for predatory characteristics is a massive project. Several organizations worked hard to create lists of predatory and legitimate journals, but the lists remain questionable because many genuine journals were marked as predatory.

Because these publishers pose a threat to science and academic evaluation, it is the responsibility of authors, institutions, and editors to support only genuine research. They must not publish in predatory journals or serve on their Editorial Boards.

Institutions should avoid creating unrealistic standards that drive authors to make rash judgments. They must educate their faculty about the recognition of predatory journals.

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<b>CONTRIBUTIONS BY AUTHORS</b>	
<b>1 Saeeda Abdullah:</b>	Did the Literature review and wrote the manuscript.
<b>2 Joharia Azhar:</b>	Did final corrections of the manuscript and added some references.