

“The Indian Struggle Against Predatory Journals: The Importance Of Quality Control”

Dr. Anil Sharma¹, Mr. Soumyakant Dash^{2*}, Dr. Vilis Pawar³, Mr. Abhijit Vhatkar⁴

¹Assistant Professor, St. Kabir Institute of Professional Studies, Ahmedabad (ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4299-0340)

^{2*}Assistant Professor, Global Business School and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Pune (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9297-7710)

³Assistant Professor, Global Business School and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Pune (ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3455-5349)

⁴Assistant Professor, Global Business School and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Pune (ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5308-463X)

*Corresponding Author: - Mr. Soumyakant Dash

*Assistant Professor, Global Business School and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Pune (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9297-7710)
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Abstract

We hear the expression "Publish or perish" all the time these days in the scientific community. The most significant indicator of a researcher's advancement or prowess in their specific fields, whether they are a rookie researcher or an experienced expert, is their publishing metrics. The initial purpose of publishing a scientific paper was to share your groundbreaking discoveries regarding a particular ailment with the rest of the world. Every article was intended to provide an appropriate research question's solution and raise a few more for additional investigation. However, this has become a never-ending "rat race" of publication metrics rather than high-quality research due to the pressures of "publish or perish." Publications are used to evaluate your success at various levels, not your worth or your desire to make a difference in the community. Publications are a significant factor of student achievement, selection in job interviews, promotions, and other outcomes. As a result, our discipline is in a wild rush to publish new work. The emphasis is on the publications that a research project can produce, not on the validity of the study or the outcomes of the research. Publication is the main goal of doing a research project. A research effort is deemed unsuccessful if it does not produce any publications. The goal of the current study was to determine which category of educational and research institutions in India publishes the majority of their work in predatory open access journals and to ascertain whether academicians in India are aware of these publications

Keywords: Scientific Publishing, Predatory Journals, Quality Regulation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to find the answers to the questions that cross their minds, researchers engage in self-motivated creative activity known as research on a systematic basis.

Some professors paid questionable media to showcase their work after the UGC decided in 2010 that research was necessary for teachers to advance in their careers. The nation's higher education system is extensive, with 903 universities, 39,050 colleges, and 10,011 independent institutes.

In global university rankings, Indian universities frequently perform poorly. Few Indian institutions make the top 500, and none are among the top 200 worldwide. This is mostly because faculty members conduct relatively little high-quality research, publish it in journals, and conduct relatively little of it (Bohannon, 2013). However, the government's increasing reliance on research has given rise to a new issue: publications in dubious or predatory journals.

When a person claiming to be from a "scientific journal" approached the young researcher, he was eager to submit an article (Xia et al., 2015). If he deposited money into a bank account, it would be completed in 72 hours without any peer review by academic experts. Greetings from the world of "predatory journals," which solicit manuscripts from researchers, publish subpar or unreliable studies without the required vetting by academic professionals, and frequently demand exorbitant fees for the service.

The majority of prey for predatory journals is found in developing nations, particularly among rising economies where research output is expanding quickly. It is not altogether unexpected that India leads the globe in predatory publishing.

The Government of India established the University Grants Commission (UGC) as a statutory body to coordinate, establish, and uphold university education standards for instruction, assessment, and research. As a proactive measure to address the issue of predatory publications, UGC developed a white list of excellent journals. However, the list was contaminated with low-quality publications and received harsh criticism as a result of some errors made during its development and execution. The UGC approved list contained a substantial number of low-quality publications, which let in a wave of desperate authors (Cariappa et al., 2016).

These predatory publishers use unethical publishing techniques. They create websites that may resemble those of reputable publishers in an effort to deceive researchers (Cobey et al., n.d.). The phrase was first used by Jeffrey Beall, a librarian at the University of Colorado in Denver in the United States, who published a list of hundreds of such works on his blog a while back. After allegedly coming under pressure from his job, Mr. Beall removed the list (Beall, 2016).

Since the majority of them were situated in India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, the publication of predatory journals was a burgeoning industry in the subcontinent. As there are now journals solely devoted to dubious medications, medical research may take the biggest hit (Beall, 2016). Predatory journals' principal draw is their assurance that papers will be published quickly. Any peer-reviewed work may typically take six months to publish because there must be extensive cross-checking. If you make a sacrifice there, quality suffers.

Problem Statement

Each year, India produces tens of thousands of books, articles, and research papers. Academic writing and publication have undergone significant changes as a result of the development and revolution in the field of information technology. On the one hand, it has brought forth some best practices, and on the other, it has opened doors for unethical behavior. Initiatives like Open Access Resources, Digital Object Identifier (DOI), Indexing, and Impact Factor Calculation are commendable, but their proper use raises concerns. In the recent past, a great deal of predatory, questionable, or phony publications and periodicals had been born (Beall, 2013). They have developed into a lucrative industry for many since they now sell astonishingly priced publications that break every scientific rule. In such journals, the issues of quality, relevance, and research components are either ignored or never taken into account. Plagiarism, paid publishing, and un-reviewed papers are widespread among them.

The National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources' decision to issue 2462 journals with Indian provenance an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) last year raises serious concerns. Do we actually make a contribution to academics and research in line with the number of registered journals? Since the UGC policy states that "journals with ISSN numbers" are required, many publishers and other interested parties are eager to obtain this number (Eriksson & Helgesson, 2017).

Many observers believed that these institutes in academia's periphery were mostly drawing articles with questionable scientific worth, if not fraudulent or plagiarized reports. But according to a recent investigation, many of the dubious publications in predatory journals are being published by the best Indian academic organizations.

Objectives

- To research and comprehend the situation with predatory journals in Asia.
- To determine the factors behind the expansion and promotion of predatory journals in India

To critically assess predatory journals using Jeffrey Beall's proposed Criteria for Determining Predatory Open-Access Publishers.

2. METHOD

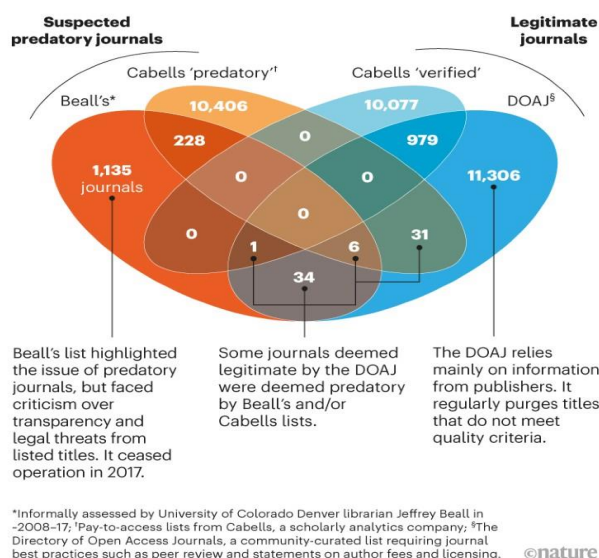
A total of 28 articles and research papers from eleven Indian-originated predatory publications were examined. Journals were chosen based on the Jeffrey Beall Criteria for Identifying Predatory Open-Access Publishers (Xia et al., 2015). Five entries at random from each diary were chosen. The likelihood of being reviewed, plagiarism, language, citation, reference, the type of the author's institutional connection, the editorial board of the journal, and publication costs made up a significant portion of the analysis.

3. RESULTS

Anything that is predisposed or intended to harm or manipulate others for one's own benefit or financial gain is described by the definition as "predatory." The characteristics of predatory journals and publishers, a global problem, include emphasizing self-interest over academic scholarship, straying from sound editorial and publication norms, lacking procedural transparency, and/or using aggressive and indiscriminate canvassing techniques (Gasparyan et al., 2016). Contradictory claims, false impact factors, inaccurate and/or misrepresented editorial board details, false indexing details, and misleading claims about their peer-review process are common features of a predatory journal's website or emails, as well as an unprofessional and poorly written web page overall. Online predatory publishers take advantage of the "Gold Open Access" paradigm, in which publication processing fees rather than journal subscriptions serve as their primary source of income. Predatory journals affect both experienced researchers and novice ones.

NO LIST TO RULE THEM ALL

Assessments of which journals are likely to be predatory or legitimate do not tally, and titles can appear in both categories. There is no way to know which journals were considered for a list but left off, or which were not considered.



Source: Strinzel, M., Severin, A., Milzow, K., & Egger, M. (2019). Blacklists and whitelists to tackle predatory publishing: a cross-sectional comparison and thematic analysis. *MBio*, 10(3), e00411-19.

A scoping study that compared articles about predatory journals found that their descriptions occasionally matched, occasionally did not, and occasionally directly disagreed. These discrepancies imply that developing a workable definition would necessitate reaching agreement among academics, publishers, research institutes, and the general public.

The causes of the expansion and support of predatory journals

1. Researchers from low- or middle-income countries frequently lack the tools and support that researchers from more affluent countries do when they fall prey to these "predatory" journals. These academics might be able to afford the costs of publishing since their grants mandate them to do so and 'predatory' OA journals don't impose exorbitant fees that deter authors. The bulk of these publications' proprietors also misrepresent their locations, saying that they are in Nigeria, India, or Pakistan when they are actually in the UK, Canada, USA, or Germany(Eriksson & Helgesson, 2018).
2. "The demand created by increased focus on the quantity of research publications as a key determinant of the academic achievement of a faculty/scientist being considered for appointment or promotion" is the main driving force behind the cancerous proliferation of predatory journals(Haug & Haug, 2013).
3. Predatory journals prey on young researchers or academicians for financial gain or personal gain through article-processing fees and publication fees, without meeting the standard publishing standards, by taking advantage of their desire to have their articles published simply for the purpose of enhancing their resumes and CVs, landing jobs, receiving funding or grants for additional research, or even getting promoted in their line of work(Bartholomew & Bartholomew, 2014).
4. Some academics might believe that the phrases open access publishing and predatory publication are interchangeable and equivalent. However, ethical standards and established scientific reporting methods are followed by authorized open access publishing. Even as awareness grows, it will be challenging to eliminate "predatory" publishers because even if researcher e-mail responses decline, these publishers will simply send more spam. Even if their actions may not be against the law, they are utterly unethical and unprofessional. The first step in solving this problem is raising awareness. To help raise awareness and perhaps lower demand for bogus publications, all reputable OA journals should publish on this issue(Dadkhah et al., 2016).
5. Because they lack publishing experience, young researchers are oblivious of shady publications. Companies that produce predatory journals in this case provide young scientists, who are frequently discouraged by a string of rejections, with quick peer reviews and publication timeframes. Sometimes writers doubt the caliber of their own writing and would rather have it published in a predatory journal(Gasparyan et al., 2015).
6. The majority of mistakes discovered during the peer review process are the result of insufficient training or understanding(Glick, 2016).
7. However, dishonest researchers could use the absence of peer review in predatory journals to publish defective research or dubious findings(Richtig et al., 2018).
8. These journals entice inexperienced researchers and aspiring academics by promising them quick and thorough review cycles that might last from a few days to several weeks, as well as guaranteed publication upon payment of fees(Stone & Rossiter, 2015).
9. The fact that most research institutes tend to favor quantity above quality is one of the main factors for such journals' success (of publications). Academics are hired and promoted in great part based on how many publications they have(Power, 2018).

10. The predatory journal industry has encroached on every university, and many of them are genuinely run by faculty members(Harvey et al., 2017).
11. The majority of UGC standards are designed so that quantity of publications, not quality, serves as the primary criterion for appointments and term increases.
12. Because "predatory" journals offer the services that are sought after, many researchers publish in them(Bohannon, 2013).
13. A large number of journals designated as "predatory" are not located in the nations mentioned on their websites(Yucha, 2015).
14. Many scholars from underdeveloped nations explore for alternative journals because they believe Western journals would reject their work(Bradley-Springer, 2015).
15. Many academics refrain from submitting to prestigious journals because they believe their training in research methods and reporting is insufficient(Beall, 2012).
16. Early career researchers in impoverished countries need to be made aware of the significance of journal selection(Manca et al., 2017).

A large number of these "predatory" periodicals are found in emerging nations like Nigeria, Pakistan, and India. Similar to this, the majority of scholars that publish in these "predatory" journals hail from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The feeling that these authors don't belong in the developed world or its publishing organizations is one cause, according to social identity threat. Because of their nationality and faith, these authors were less likely to publish in Western journals and felt more linked to the journals from their region of the world. Additionally, they believed that because of these factors, Western publications would be biased against them. Another issue is that many prestigious journals have editorial boards, subject matter, and opinions that are Western in orientation and may not seem appropriate for non-Western scholars. By the names of editorial boards, publishers, and/or branding of those prestigious journals, non-Western researchers may also feel excluded(Bowman, 2014).

3. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

It is necessary to clarify words like "known journals" in the 2010 UGC Guidelines, and at the very least, API scores of papers published in predatory journals should not be taken into account. The majority of the paid open access journals operating in India do not adhere to the Committee on Publication Ethics' (COPE) criteria. Predatory journals are false open access publications that frequently tout high "impact factors" while publishing for a hefty price inferior non-peer-reviewed submissions that contaminate the scientific literature. India is home to 42% of the world's fraudulent journal publishers.

Getting published for a fee doesn't take any effort, lengthy training, or intellectual prowess; all you need is some thing or just few letters typed in on a page. Regardless of what was written in the text, your article will be accepted and published. Anyone can submit something and have it published as their "own" work even if it contains complete plagiarism or is just gibberish. Peer review is a very different process from predatory publications, whose only goal is to post content on their website. In such publications, where people dump the false materials and get them published, the quality of peer review has never been evident in the papers published.

Regarding the indexing and abstracting of these journals, there is a lot of ambiguity. Some of these journals might assert that they are abstracted and indexed by ambiguous websites like SlideShare, Google Docs, NewJour, and others while in reality they are not. However, since Google Scholar does not do quality checks, the majority of these predatory publishers can appear in its database. They occasionally make bogus claims to be included in indexes maintained by organizations like Scopus, Embase, etc(Grudniewicz et al., 2019). It is crucial for academic institutions and regulatory authorities to have a mechanism in place to discern between legitimate and fraudulent academic faculty publications in order to properly recognize and reward honorable and honest faculty members in light of the extremely tainted publication landscape. Just as the "target strategy" failed in the family planning program during the emergency in India, the "target approach" of publishing is proving to be counterproductive. Serious researchers shouldn't publish their sincere work in such publications, especially those who are young. When "international" or "global" are used in journal titles that boast an abnormally high impact factor, and we need to be cautious.

To assist students and teachers in selecting journals wisely, seminars and discussions should be held along these lines. Similar to how many coronavirus variations swiftly adapted to withstand newer immunizations, such predatory publications and awards continue to create cutting-edge strategies to evade inspection. If we wish to halt this fraud that passes for science, we must routinely update our databases. Last but not least, it is past time we corrected the bias created by our forebears, who emphasized quantity above quality of study. NEP 2020 has outlined some challenging objectives to enhance our nation's research culture. The goal is to promote multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research so that everyone can benefit from it when it is used in the real world.

The following list includes the common warnings gleaned from studies published in predatory journals. In order to avoid falling victim to such fake publications, the writers are encouraged to take the following into account before submitting their paper to any journal:

1. Articles of poor quality or lacking in scientific sanctity
2. The length of published articles varies
3. Significant differences in the article kinds
4. Too many grammar mistakes
5. There is a vast variety of references and their styles.
6. Insufficient article citation
7. Insufficiently specified or not indicated article processing fee
8. Regular correspondence or emails that are incorrectly written and grammatically incorrect;
9. Emails that are unrelated to the writers' possible areas of expertise
10. Emails that are periodically sent to prospective authors and include the names of important recognition organizations like the University Grants Commission and the Medical Council of India.
11. Emails that are not appropriately addressed or responded to.
12. Misstated values of the impact factor
13. Journals do not adhere to the rules set forth by the Committee on Publication Ethics
14. Members of the editorial board are lesser-known experts in their fields or their biographies are unavailable.

Through these editorial observations, we will continue to inform the writers and reviewers on subjects that will advance their knowledge and inform them of the prevalent misconducts and unethical behaviors in the field of medical writing. Predatory publication must be combated by ongoing, flexible efforts. As long as institutions utilize a scholar's output of papers as a criterion for graduation or career promotion, the threat is unlikely to go away. Predatory publications thrive in environments that encourage the "publish or perish" mentality, lack of awareness of predatory publishing, and difficulty distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate publications. Predatory journals are also quick to adjust to rules and countermeasures. It is getting easier for fraudulent publishers to pass for real ones as scientific publishers experiment with novel forms and economic structures online. In our call to action, we extend an invitation to others.

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