

Internal Quality Assurance Cell – Faculty of Science
University of Jaffna

A Guide to Identify Predatory Journals and Publishers

1. Background

Predatory publishing¹/write-only publishing²/deceptive publishing³ has become an academic business that lures academic mainly young from developing countries. The fraudulent publication is referred as predatory since academics and scholars are coaxed or ticked by the publishers to publish their work with them. A predator (publisher) is an opportunistic that lures and exploits your (academic) needs in its favour (publication) but offers no or little reward.

¹**Predatory publishing** is an exploitive academic publishing business model that involves charging publication fees to authors without checking articles for quality and legitimacy and without providing the other editorial and publishing services that legitimate academic journals provide, whether open access or not (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predatory_publishing).

²**A write-only** research journal is a research journal that publishes papers but is never read (hence write/publish-only). Its purpose is twofold: to (a) give a researcher some reputation return on their work by having it pass (some form of) peer review and to (b) make money for publishers (<https://nythesis.com/2011/09/13/definition-of-write-only-research-journal/>).

³**Deceptive publishing** is a practice whereby a company creates a journal on false pretenses for the purposes of defrauding authors, helping authors deceive their colleagues, or both. Deceptive journals are almost invariably funded by author-side article processing charges (APCs). The publisher makes its money by promising rigorous peer review and editorial oversight, but in fact accepting all papers that are submitted and accompanied by an APC, thus providing a service to authors in need of publication while misrepresenting the process by which its articles are selected (<http://osiglobal.org/2019/03/19/osi-brief-deceptive-publishing/>).

2. Objective

The objective of this guide is to provide an awareness on predatory publishers and basic features of predatory publishers so that academics can easily identify them or try to confirm that the publisher whom they are working with is a predatory or genuine. By providing this guide our academic community will be prevented from becoming prey to fraudulent publishers and help they publish their quality work in recognized publishers. This guide is neither a comprehensive nor a complete document but does intent to provide basic guidelines as publishing in predatory journals will harm or spoil their career and may bring embarrassment individually or collectively. One must make sure that one's work is published in a place that values your work and is recognized, trustworthy and reputable.

3. Features of predatory journals and publishers

There are some salient features of potential predatory journals. Some indication (not exclusively) are given below;

- The primary goal of the journal or publisher is to make money and thus ask for publication fee which is generally less than US\$ 150.
- The publisher or the journal does not give importance by means of peer-review or editing to quality of the work.
- Generally the publisher is not belonged to a recognized academic entity or society
- Often the journal carries a broad scope and title
- The journal or publisher make false claims indicating impact factors and indexing details. Many predatory journals claim that they are indexed by DOAJ and JCR Master List. If a journal is indexed by JCR or/and DOAJ then the journal is not predatory. However ensure that the claim is authentic by searching official websites of DOAJ (<https://doaj.org/>) and JCR Master Journal List (<https://mjl.clarivate.com/home>)
- Editorial Board and Editorial process are not clearly mentioned.
- Speedy publication (in days) and no mention about the received and accepted dates of the manuscripts.
- Published articles are formatted and there are factual and typo errors

4. Identifying legitimate publishers/journals

Recognized or legitimate publishers can be identified from the following data base (not an exclusive data).

- Web of Science core collection
- Journal Citation Reports (JCR) – <http://mjl.clarivate.com>
- Scopus – <https://www.scopus.com/sources>
- DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) - <https://mjl.clarivate.com/home>
- EBSCO – <https://www.ebsco.com/title-lists>
- EMBASE – https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/embase-biomedical_research_/embasecoverage-and-content
- COPE (Committee on Publishing Ethics)
- OASPA (Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association)
- STM (International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers)
- <https://www.sljol.info/>

5. Useful References

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- Bartholomew RE. Science for sale: the rise of predatory journals. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. 2014, 107(10):384-385. doi:10.1177/0141076814548526.

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- Severin A and Low N. Readers beware! Predatory journals are infiltrating citation databases. International Journal of Public Health. 2019, 64, 1123–1124 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-019-01284-3>
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