

Understanding Predatory Publishers



By
Njeri Karanu
Assistant Editor, AJFAND¹

This is a follow-up and update of [this article](#) published by AJFAND in 2017 that warns authors and researchers against falling prey to predatory journals. The article contains predatory journal trends that authors can use to evaluate whether a journal is credible or not.

“Publish or perish” is a common phrase in research circles meant to emphasize the need for researchers to publish their work. On the other hand, we have “publish and vanish”, a phrase meant to warn researchers against publishing in unrecognized journals and to carefully select credible and reputable journals to publish in.

What is Predatory Publishing or Predatory Journals

Predatory publishing is an exploitative academic publishing business that exploits researchers’ need to publish for a fee without providing peer review, editing, and quality checking services. Predatory publishers are out to make money; they are not so much interested in progressing scientific research and learning.

Predatory publishing is still a challenge many researchers face as they are continuously targeted by these publishers with often too-good-to-be-true publishing opportunities. At AJFAND we still get researchers who want to re-publish their articles in our journal after learning that they had published in predatory journals. We also get authors who are in a hurry to get their work published; such authors are likely to fall victim to these predators.

At AJFAND, we take the time to process very carefully every manuscript that is submitted to us. Of course, manuscripts that do not make the mark get rejected, but only as a last resort.

¹ Program Officer-Rural Outreach Africa and Assistant Editor- AJFAND, Email: knjeri2003@gmail.com

How can you tell that a journal is credible?

1. Credible journals will appear in one or more reputable indexes such as:
 - a. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) <https://doaj.org/>
 - b. African Journals Online (AJOL) <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajfand/about>
 - c. Bioline International <http://www.bioline.org.br/journals>
 - d. BioOne <https://bioone.org/>
 - e. CABI Abstracts <https://www.cabi.org/publishing-products/cab-abstracts/>
 - f. Jstor <https://about.jstor.org/publishers/contribute-content/>
 - g. ProQuest <https://www.proquest.com/>
 - h. Scopus <https://www.scopus.com/sources>
 - i. Web of Science Journal Citation Reports <https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/solutions/editorial/>
2. Credible journals will not appear in websites that list predatory journals and publishers such as
 - a. Beall's List of Potential Predatory Journals and Publishers <https://beallslist.net/>
 - b. Stop Predatory Journals <https://predatoryjournals.com/publishers/>
3. Credible journals will not display unethical and fraudulent practices common in predatory journals
<https://ajfand.net/Volume17/No3/Authors%20beware%20of%20predatory%20journals.pdf>

When using indexes as a judging criterion, it is important to note that not all indexes are useful or impactful. Quality controlled indexes check the quality of what the journals publish and only include journals that comply with their quality standards. Citation indexes are quality controlled and also provide citation information of journals they index. General indexes are the equivalent of a telephone directory; they do not have quality checks on what the journals publish.

Indexes such as the ones listed above are quality controlled and thus impactful.

There are many resources available online with selection criteria for credible journals, and practices displayed by predatory journals. The Tress Academic website gives comprehensive information about predatory journals, why to avoid them, and how to identify them <https://tressacademic.com/identify-predatory-journals/>

If you are still in doubt about a particular journal, ask your colleagues, or your professor and other experienced researchers. They will likely know if a journal is predatory, and will usually refer you to reputable journals for publishing.