

Authors Beware of Predatory Journals



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Following a piece published by University World News Africa Edition¹ on the threat predatory journals pose to academic credibility, we decided to share our experiences and some tips in identifying predatory journals.

In recent years, there have been many cases of authors knowingly/unknowingly publishing their work in predatory journals. This susceptibility comes from an ever increasing pressure to publish for promotions for academicians; and for researchers, prolificacy, due to the competitive nature of research grants.

It is imperative for authors and researchers to do their own due diligence before submitting their manuscripts to publishers. Authors have written to us wanting to re-publish their work after they find out later that they had published in a predatory journal.

Beall's List was a great resource for listing predatory journals. The website (list) is no longer available and now authors have to carefully scrutinize publishers' websites before submitting manuscripts. However, there are common trends noticed in predatory publishers that can help authors in making decisions.

Some indicators that can help an author know if they are dealing with a predatory journal are:

- i. Poor quality of published papers: there are spelling and grammatical mistakes even in the titles. Predatory journals will publish almost all that is sent to them, even articles that are clearly out of the scope of the journal.
- ii. Lack of editorial board, or names that are unknown in the field of research. Predatory journals will have a "cosmetic" list of editorial board members to deceive potential authors. Find out if the members have published works.
- iii. Lack of manuscript submission guidelines, or submission requirements are too easy.

- iv. Predatory journals will ask for a submission fee, unlike a publication fee that reputable journals ask for. These outfits are out to make a profit regardless of the outcome of the manuscript. At AJFAND, we only ask for article processing fee when the article has passed through the peer review process and has been accepted for publishing.
- v. Quick turnaround times due to lack of peer-review, quick peer review, or no review comments. Peer review is an integral part of scholarly publishing that ensures only quality manuscripts are produced. Peer review takes time. At AJFAND, it takes an average of 6 months from submission to publishing. Impatient authors find themselves targeted by predatory journals promising as little as 2 weeks to publish their work.
- vi. The journal will not be indexed in any of the major databases like Web of Science or Scopus.
- vii. Predatory journals will send unsolicited invitations/emails to submit manuscripts.

This is a not an exhaustive list, there could be other indicators not listed here.

Universities and research institutions need to create awareness of predatory journals so that careers are built on solid peer reviewed research.

According to a research published in the New York Times on Predatory journals², researchers also are targeted by these journals to become members of the editorial boards. They send enticing emails soliciting applications to become editors. It later becomes difficult to withdraw names from these journals' websites. They use the names of high-profile researchers to promote their journals.

References

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