

## Predacious Journals: A Hazard to Empirical Study

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### ABSTRACT

*The rise of predacious journals poses a serious threat to the integrity of academic publishing. These journals take advantage of the open-access model to publish substandard articles, bypassing essential scholarly processes like peer review and editorial oversight. They undermine empirical research by publishing unverified content for a fee, thus compromising academic quality and ethical standards. While some predatory journals are easily identifiable, others mimic legitimate ones, making it difficult for authors to discern their authenticity. Therefore, authors must be vigilant and publish only in journals that follow recognized ethical and editorial guidelines.*

**Keywords:** Open-Access, Predatory Journals, Peer Review, Academic Ethics, Empirical Study.

### Introduction

Predatory journals, often referred to as “predacious journals,” charge publication fees but fail to provide standard academic services such as rigorous peer review, transparent editorial processes, and qualified editorial boards. These journals compromise research integrity by allowing low-quality and often plagiarized work to enter the scientific domain (1). In many cases, article processing charges (APCs) are not disclosed until the author submits the manuscript, and the review process is either superficial or entirely absent (2). Such journals frequently offer rapid publication—sometimes within 72 hours—emphasizing profit over scientific merit.

### Expansion and Influence of Predatory Journals

In India, research publications are increasingly required for academic advancement and professional recognition. Consequently, scholars, especially young researchers, are often pressured to publish quickly, sometimes falling prey to illegitimate journals (3). An ISSN, commonly mistaken for a quality indicator, is often the only credential some authors consider, though it merely identifies a serial publication and does not reflect journal integrity (4).

The term “predatory journal” was first coined by librarian Jeffrey Beall, who created a widely known list of questionable journals and publishers on his blog Scholarly Open Access (5). Despite the removal of his list in 2017, its legacy continues to shape awareness. From 2010 to 2014, the number of articles published in predatory journals increased dramatically from 53,000 to 420,000, with an average APC of USD 178 (6).

### Ethical Concerns

Predatory publishing bypasses the academic quality control offered by peer review. As a result, plagiarized, inaccurate, or unethical research may be published and misused in future studies (7). Key ethical issues include:

- **Lack of Editorial Standards:** Predatory journals often do not correct errors, disclose conflicts of interest, or follow standard ethical guidelines. They fail to comply with principles outlined by recognized bodies such as COPE and WAME (8,9).

- **Falsification and Deception:** These journals may list fake editorial board members, use non-existent addresses, or falsely claim indexing in reputable databases to mislead authors (10).
- **Academic Misconduct:** Researchers who publish in predatory journals may use such publications to enhance their resumes, thereby misrepresenting their academic standing (11).
- **Wastage of Research Funds:** Publicly funded research that is published in predatory journals fails to make a credible academic impact, thereby wasting valuable resources (12).
- **Lack of Archiving and Discoverability:** Unlike reputable journals archived in databases such as PubMed Central, predatory journals are often inaccessible or vanish over time (13).
- **Damage to Public Trust:** When non-experts or professionals consult literature from predatory journals, it can mislead healthcare decisions and scientific understanding (14).

### Promoting Ethical Publishing

Organizations like the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) offer comprehensive guidelines for ethical publishing, including transparency, authorship accountability, and responsible research conduct (9). Instead of relying solely on journal metrics like impact factors, institutions are encouraged to evaluate research quality independently, as recommended by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) (15).

### Role of Authors

Researchers have a critical role in maintaining the integrity of scientific literature. Authors must avoid dual submissions, ensure transparency in methodology, and be cautious of unsolicited invitations from unknown journals. Offers of guaranteed publication without peer review and requests for fees without prior evaluation should raise red flags (1,6,10).

### Conclusion

Predacious journals present a significant hazard to evidence-based research. By allowing low-quality, non-peer-reviewed publications into the scientific domain, they erode academic credibility and public trust. It is essential for researchers, academic institutions, and funding bodies to recognize and actively avoid predatory publishing practices. Promoting ethical standards and critical assessment of journals is the key to preserving the quality of academic literature.

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