

An Encounter with Predatory Journal

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ABSTRACT

The concept of open access journals was introduced with the aim to make the scientific articles accessible and visible to all. But a new threat called predatory journals has emerged targeting the young researchers of developing nations. These bogus journals mislead the authors as well as readers in various negative ways. Hence, we should recognize such journals and avoid becoming the prey.

KEY WORDS

Open access journals, Predatory journals

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of open access journals was introduced with an aim to make the scientific articles and researches accessible to all. With an easy internet accessibility and explosion of academic writings, lots of open access online journals have arose without any check. During the course, there are some journals whose sole aim to earn money rather than contribution to the scientific world. Young researchers often fall prey to such predatory journals, hence it is a must to be aware that such journal exists in order to save our valuable researches.

Who are the predators?

Most often predatory journals are easy to recognize as they have no or poor peer review process and they lack transparency in terms of editorial board. Their main aim is to earn money by charging the researchers nominal fees for processing their articles. These predators are termite for the academic publishing world as they ignore the errors of the author and usually publish low quality paper thus compromising the standard of an academic paper. But

some are highly sophisticated and operate websites that mirror prominent mainstream journals.¹

Who are the preys?

Usually they target young researchers and doctoral students of the developing countries mainly Southeast Asia and Africa. Authors who publish in so-called predatory journals have little to no history of previous publications or citations.² These journals have negatively impacted the research world. As they are bogus journals so with passage of time they are most likely to shut down. Moreover, these work cannot be searched in search engines. Thus there is a huge loss of knowledge and research work outcomes. Furthermore, these journals publish the work without proper peer review so chances of publishing irrelevant studies and false outcomes are high. Hence misleading the readers with false information and knowledge. Predatory journals wisely choose their victims. This is all accomplished by a well developed framework that includes web development steps, intensive e-mail marketing and victim selections.³

Academic writing in Nepal

The competition among scholars has become intense in Nepal as has been happening around the developing countries. In order to prove scholar's competency for job applications and academic promotions, they need to have certain number of publications. Immense pressure on young researchers and doctoral students of developing countries have led to the situation of "publish or perish".⁴ Moreover lack of publishing platforms and scientific publication literacy in developing countries have led to mushrooming of these journals. Furthermore affordable processing fee targeted for young scholars is the major factor.² Many academicians merely want to increase the number of publications instead of contributing to the knowledge pool. Such scholars become easy prey for them. Another important catalyst to this problem is international visibility so as to enhance the reputation of both the researcher and his/her institution.²

Encounter with a predatory journal

One of my colleague suggested to me that it's easy to publish in Global Journal of Otolaryngology. I approached the journal eagerly. Initially, I had some bargaining with the editor regarding publication fee, but later we settled down to publish free of cost. Within few days my article got accepted without any peer review. And before I even gave my feedback, without proofreading, the article had already been published without Digital Object Identifier (DOI) in their website. Due to doubts I checked about the journal, and I found it was a predatory journal. Following which I had a tough time withdrawing the article from the journal

which was already published. Furthermore, as search engines would show this article even after its withdrawal, I had difficulty to get my article accepted on various other genuine journals.

How to recognize the predators?

The first and foremost step in avoiding such predators is to be well aware of such journals. Thorough assessment of journals pre-submission is a must. This can be achieved by going through the Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), consulting standard indexes, cross checking International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), Impact Factor (IF) etc. Institutions in the developing countries should identify such publishers and discourage them by devaluing the publications in such journals. Clark has suggested a five point plan to identify a predatory journal.⁵ Similarly, Jeffrey Beall, at the University of Colorado Denver Library, has maintained a list of hundreds of such journals based on his set of criteria. The number of predatory publishers has risen from 18 in 2011 to nearly 700 in 2015.⁶ But sometimes new journals are often wrongly listed in Beall's list and not all new journals are predators.⁷ Basically a white list is necessary but is not present currently. Hence an author must go through thorough research to differentiate a bogus predatory journal from the authentic one.

Way forward

Building publication record is not as important as publishing a quality paper in a reputable journal. Our institutions must make the junior researchers aware of the existence of the predatory journals. Trainings should be directed to optimize the publication literacy.

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