Combatting Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences

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Combatting Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences

National academies plan assault on predatory journals

By Robin Boox

Academies to target predatory journals

Project aims to map global impact of bad practices in publishing and scale up interventions

"Some of the information getting out there to policymakers on Covid-19 is alarming," said Boris Woll, deputy director of the Interacademy Partnership.
The International Working Group

“Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences”
Study objectives

- Define predatory and unethical practices in academic journals and conferences
- Gauge their prevalence and impact
- Understand the primary drivers or root causes
- Examine efforts to-date to combat predatory journals and conferences around the world
- Provide concrete recommendations for a GLOBAL STRATEGY to address the problem, that engages all key stakeholders
Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences: an IAP study overview

Predatory academic journals and conferences: raising awareness and understanding
Presented by IAP Working Group members
Ana Maria Cetto | Lai Meng Looi | Stefan Eriksson | Aftawosen Asrat Kassaye

“Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences”
Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences

Report launch

Panellists represent:

- The IAP Working Group
- Global Young Academy
- UNESCO
- International Science Council
- Global Research Council
- Cabells / Digital Science
- Hindawi Publishing
- Elsevier
- African Research Universities Alliance

ALL ARE WELCOME - Register here: https://tinyurl.com/predatorypracticeslaunch

“Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences”
Common features of “predatory” journals and conferences

- They solicit articles from researchers through practices that exploit the pressure on researchers to publish and present their work.
- Features include, but are not limited to:
  - rapid pay-to-publish/present models without rigorous (or indeed any) peer review
  - fake editorial or conference boards falsely listing respected scientists
  - fraudulent impact factors or metrics
  - journal and conference titles that are deceptively similar to legitimate ones
  - aggressive spam invitations to solicit articles and abstracts, including outside of a researcher’s own expertise
- These genuinely fraudulent practices continue to evolve and are becoming more difficult to distinguish between low quality, unethical and questionable publishing and conferencing practices.
Predatory journals: no definition, no defence

Leading scholars and publishers from ten countries have agreed a definition of predatory publishing that can protect scholarship. It took 12 hours of discussion, 18 questions and 3 rounds to reach.

“Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences”
Landmark survey of researchers

Over 80% perceive that predatory practices are a serious problem or on the rise in their country of work.

“Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences”
Survey headlines

- Researchers at **ALL career stages** need to be on their guard.
- Researchers in **low and middle income countries** are more vulnerable.
- Some **disciplines** are more vulnerable than others:
  - researchers in arts and humanities with predatory journals
  - researchers in transdisciplinary & engineering sciences with predatory conferences
- **At least 14%** of respondents admit they have used a predatory journal or conference.
- This equates to **over 1.2 million researchers** of the 8.8m around the world who could have used predatory outlets, with **billions of dollars of research costs** (people, materials, time) wasted as a result. **This requires urgent attention.**
At least 24% of respondents have either published in a predatory journal, participated in a predatory conference, or don’t know if they have.

They were not aware at the time

"The conference looked very legitimate and non predatory. There was support from the university and several well known professors were in the invitations."

They needed to advance their career

"You need to publish in a predatory journal to stay in the race."

It was a faster, easier, or cheaper option

"I feel guilty but it is necessary to publish (in predatory journals) for my students to complete their study faster due to the limitation of time and scholarship."

They were encouraged by their peers

"The lead author suggested we publish in a predatory journal after a few rejections and one co-author was an editor at the journal, which made it difficult to criticize."

"Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences"
Why it is important to address these practices

If left unchallenged, the majority of respondents believe predatory practices will have detrimental effects.

- **Fuel misinformation in public policy**: 82%
- **Infiltrate and undermine the research enterprise**: 69%
- **Widen the research gap between high income and low income countries**: 58%

“Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences"
Examples of resources already available

- A beginner’s guide to avoiding ‘predatory’ journals
  - AuthorAID

- HALO

- COPE

- DOAJ

- Predatory Reports

  Specialists analyze over 60 behavioral indicators to keep the community aware of the growing threats and to keep academia protected from exploitative operations.

- CABEELS

- Tips on How to Identify and Avoid Predatory Conferences

- ICCA

  International Congress and Convention Association

- latindex

  Online Regional Information System for Scientific Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

- “Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences”
### A spectrum of predatory publishing practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fraudulent</th>
<th>Deceptive</th>
<th>Unacceptable low-quality</th>
<th>Low-quality</th>
<th>Promising low-quality</th>
<th>Questionable quality</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Low Risk</th>
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**Typical markers:**
- Non-existent or improper peer review and misrepresenting the process by which its articles are selected
- Mimicry of other journals or websites
- No or fake editorial board
- Alternative or fake Impact Factor
- Lies about being indexed or members of publishing organisations
- Hides the costs for publishing
- Potentially illegal operations

**When does a journal become deceptive?**

When it is lying about its true purpose or misleading authors or readers about the journal status, costs involved, or services provided.

**Typical markers:**
- Low quality peer review
- Breaches of good editorial practice
- Services to authors and academia are lacking or poor
- Use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices
- Unclear about publishing charges
- Lack of satisfactory archiving
- Inactive editorial board

**When should a journal be considered low quality?**

The more markers checked, the lower the quality.
The further to the right on the spectrum, the more deserving of support to achieve quality publishing.

**Typical markers:**
- Thorough peer review
- Strong editorial boards
- Robust system to ensure research integrity and retractions
- Clear about publishing costs
- Occasionally engages in predatory practices but takes proper action when criticised
Drivers or root causes

• The monetisation and commercialisation of the research sector, including an academic publishing system whose proprietary and commercial interests may lead to conflict with research integrity, with the author-pays model being especially prone to abuse.

• Quantity-over-quality research evaluation systems, together with the institutional drivers and incentives that shape the behaviour of individual academics.

• The lack of transparency (whether fully open, anonymised or hybrid) in the peer-review process, exacerbated by poor training, capacity and recognition of peer reviewers.
Thank you

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