

MENACE OF PREDATORY PUBLISHING IN THE SCHOLARLY WORLD

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Abstract Predatory publishing is becoming one of the biggest menaces in the scholarly world. New budding authors easily become a prey to them. Article processing charges, which ensure quality, have become an enticing factor for the scholarly community which results in sub standard research practices. The study showcases the market of predatory publishing and how authors get entrapped in this scholarly mess which lacks credibility and authenticity. The study further portrays various ways which can save authors from this menace of predation.

Keywords: Predatory Publishers, Article Processing Charges, Scholarly Publishing

INTRODUCTION

Publishing in reputed journals is always considered a prestige in the scholarly world. To get associated with the publishing giants like Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, Emerald, Wiley, Springer, IEEE, Nature, PLOS, etc. add reputation and more prestige to the authors' or an institution's academic and research credentials. But a big and growing menace in the scholarly world, in the form of predatory publishing has become a bitterest pill of scholarly publishing. Though open scholarship came with a promise of accessibility, sustainability and excellence, but the pseudo-publishing in the form of predatory publishers is ruining the quality in the academic world. Predatory publishers who charge for getting author works published are sprouting all across the globe and they are becoming a worrying fact and it is really hard and difficult to cope with this type of scholarly publishing crisis (McGuigan, 2013). Their pseudo academic claims have become hateful metrics raising aggressiveness among the scholarly platforms. They have now become doubting couches that try to engulf the author community. They have become platforms that have ceased authors to think more critically and the philosophy of "self-introspection among the authors" is vanishing now. "Doing nothing" after the submission of the manuscript to the predatory publishers

is becoming a slogan among the sub-standard author community who are not ready to structure their works on the standards of excellent academic endeavours. This commercial market for scholarly world is booming and is nurtured by publishers all across the globe both at individual level as well as institutional level. Rather than democratising the universe of information it is making the authors more addicted to the wrong practices of the scholarly world. The moral and ethical values are marred because of this black era in the publishing history. Errors in the literature, incorrect findings, fraudulent data, poorly written scientific reports – a trademark of predatory publishers diminish public trust in science and its findings when looked more critically. Insufficient, or pseudo-peer review processes in the predatory publishing sectors is eroding the quality and importance of science, thus resulting in poor quality of research (Teixeira da Silva & Dobránszki, 2015). They lack sufficient quality control measures. Pseudo, inefficient and under-qualified editorial board, false quality metrics, fake peer-review process, and a bunch of papers of any flavour and from any discipline is what predatory publishing is all about and they justify it through "article processing charges" (APCs), a term which was meant to highlight quality and credibility by the leading publishers like Elsevier, Springer, Emerald, Sage, Wiley, Taylor and Francis etc.

The pseudo publishers: predatory ones used APCs as a market to make money out of authors who are not academically sound and lack research ethics. They try to catch hold of author community by sending mails to them and captivate them in this false and ugly world of research. They have become real predator and hijackers in the academic world (Švab & Makivić, 2015). Though more than half of the world's Open Access articles are published according to APC concept (Burchardt, 2014) but some of the publishers have made it a platform to make money compromising on quality and consistency. Jeffrey Beall has made available a list of predatory publishers which have been labelled in the scholarly world as unethical or shady publishers which scores to 923 for the year 2016 (Beall, 2016). They have a reputation for being of low quality and being dishonest with regard to peer review and publishing costs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Švab and Makivić (2015) showcase the academic publishing in the light of hijackers and predators who offer open access publication in exchange for payment. Burchardt (2014) also discusses about the APC-financed open access and the implications for scholars without a paying institution. Xia, Harmon, Connolly, Donnelly, Anderson, and Howard (2015) have also tried to showcase the status of authors in the predatory journal market. They try to showcase the author community that publishes in predatory journals. Spamming in scholarly publishing has also been researched by Kozak, Lefremova and Hartley (2015). They have stressed more on spurious alternative impact factors in the research world. Gutierrez, Beall, and Forero (2015) have also discussed about predatory publishers. They discuss about the deceptive strategies adopted by the predatory publishers with main focus on revenue generation. Yucha (2015) also discusses about the predatory publishing laying more stress on authors, editors and reviewers. Tenopir, Levine, Allard, Christian, Volentine, Boehm, and Nichols (2015) have also studied trustworthiness and authority of scholarly information in a digital age.

OBJECTIVES

The study showcases the market of predatory publishing and how authors get entrapped in this scholarly mess which lacks credibility and authenticity. The study further portrays various ways which can save authors from this menace of predation.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the review of earlier studies.

DISCUSSION

The advent of Open Access led to a frenzy of activity in the publishing world. It was a new model that fed into scholarly publishing's reason to exist (provide accurate new information in a timely manner) as well as the basic business goal (make money). Unfortunately, some publishers seem to be interested in only making money. While many ethical publishers use the Open Access model appropriately, some dishonest publishers have developed Open Access journals to the detriment of authors, the public, and ethical publishers around the globe.

A new study finds that the fake journal business is booming- and puts some hard numbers on this murky academic underworld. Last year alone, so-called predatory publishers took in about \$75 million and published nearly half a million articles, researchers report today online in BMC Medicine.

The trap that predatory publishers lay for author community diminishes the philosophy of "Self-Introspection" among the author community thus resulting in poor, deceptive and sub-standard quality of research. Their thinking is captivated resulting in sub-standard research. Predatory publishers are always on move to entrap novice and budding author community and run a parallel world of pseudo-academia exploiting the research world. Open access that was a real blessing for reader community is now predated by this mess of murky publishers and is turning a big but deceptive business in the publishing world, with authors becoming the worst victims both financially as well as academically. Stolen passages, deceptive data, illogical findings, and countless negative traits is what predatory publishing story is all about giving rise to an epidemic of plagiarism and betrayal. So the sea is so great in comparison to the boats which sail in them especially the new and budding authors that they are easily enticed by this mirage.

Predatory publishers who charge for getting author works published are sprouting all across the globe and they are becoming a worrying fact and it is really hard and difficult to cope with this type of scholarly publishing crisis.

It has become a dark era in scholarly world resulting in:

- Errors in the literature, incorrect findings,
- fraudulent data, poorly written scientific reports;
- a trademark of predatory publishers diminish public trust in science and its findings when looked more critically. Insufficient, or pseudo-peer review processes in the predatory publishing sectors is eroding the quality and importance of science, thus resulting of poor quality of research

Quoting an example of leading publishing giant, Elsevier, it is evident that the quality of the publication is ensured through a wide range of editorial and review processes

resulting in genuine and quality acceptance and a vivid and justified rejection. Fig. 1 clearly demonstrates as per 2014 statistics that the rejection rate ranges from 30-60%.

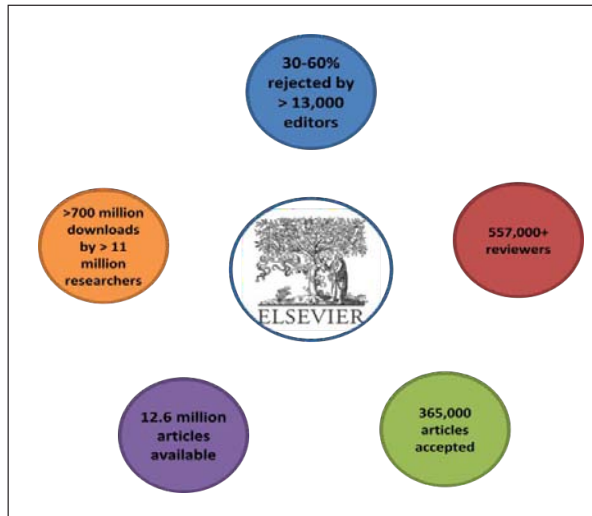


Fig. 1: Statistics of Research Papers at Elsevier in 2014

The article processing charges in case of Elsevier journals ranges from 500-5000 dollars which justifies the quality of the content published through it improving the quality through a rigorous peer review, language editing, and plagiarism detection. It is seen that the article once submitted and later on if accepted, the time span between the two is usually 1-2 years.

Medical Principles and Practice Journal, a free open access journal with a JCR Impact of 1.34 and published through a reputed publishing house, Karger, when researched clearly indicates that the rejection rate is more than 50% in comparison to the articles under process of decision. This clearly justifies that reputed and well established publishing houses never compromise over the quality (Fig. 2).

Elsevier has a policy to retract even the articles that have been published via its platform. Infringements of professional ethical codes, such as multiple submission, bogus claims of authorship, plagiarism, fraudulent use of data or the like if detected will result in the retraction of the articles again a quality reflection.

The retractions through PubMed, a leading medicinal database of National Library of Medicine is also evident from Fig. 3.

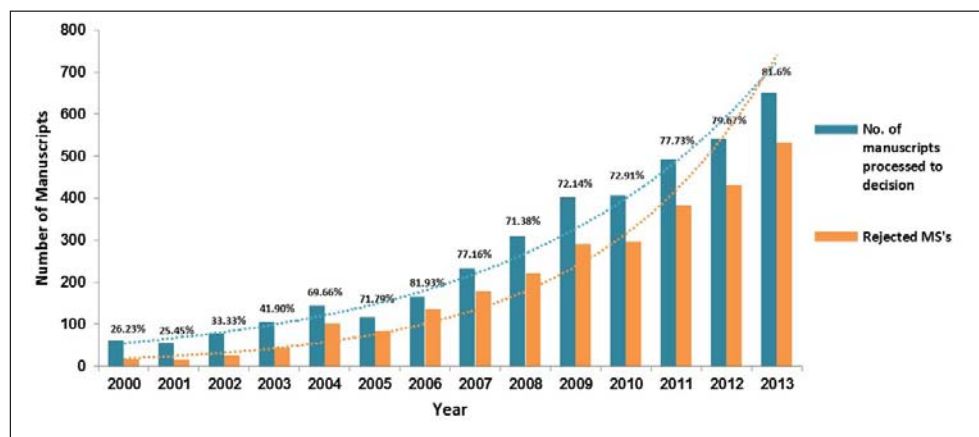


Fig. 2: Statistics Showing Rejection of Papers by Medical Principles and Practice Journal

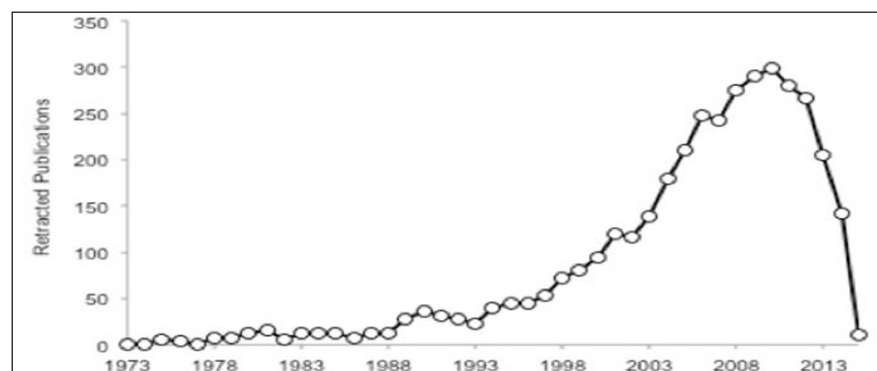


Fig. 3: Retractions through PubMed

The mandate behind the open access publishing is getting fade and is replace by the dollar market, with money, money and money the only mandate of predatory publishers. Though more than half of the world's Open Access articles are published according to APC concept but some of the publishers have made it a platform to make money compromising on quality and consistency

Predatory Claims of Publishers

- The journal falsely claims to have an impact factor, or uses some made up measure (e.g. view factor), feigning international standing.
- The publisher falsely claims to have its content indexed in legitimate abstracting and indexing services or claims that its content is indexed in resources that are not abstracting and indexing services
- The publisher demonstrates a lack of transparency in publishing operations.

Getting Entrapped in the Predatory Publishing Market

- The promise of impossibly rapid review and online publication timelines.
- A fabricated editorial board, an editor whose expertise is not in the journal's area of concern, or an absence of reviewers. Unfortunately, predatory journals have been known to add names to board, reviewer, and editorial positions without the individual's permission.
- Legitimate-sounding titles that mimic the names of established and respected journals.
- Emails that doggedly solicit papers. You've probably seen these emails. They are usually flattering; they make appealing offers; and they often ask for papers on topics that you know nothing about.
- A focus on making concessions to the author, not on careful attention to scholarship, legitimacy, ethical publishing, or scientific validity.
- Online-only publishing. Although not a clear indication of a problem because many excellent journals publish online only, predatory publishers do not invest in paper publishing. Online is the only way to make the profits they seek.

Impact on a Researcher

- Longer term reputation sacrificed for immediate gains- no academic gains(no/poor quality peer review or academic rigour)

- Permanent question mark on the academic reputation.
- Even if your research is sound, it will likely be disregarded by the academic community if published in a predatory journal
- Waste of your research funding- may be a held accountable by your funding agency.

Indian Status in the Predatory Market

Fig. 4 clearly signifies that India has a high ration both in terms of number of predatory publishers as well as contributing authors to predatory journals in comparison to rest of the world. It will be more appropriate to say that India has been coroneted with predatory publishers as well as predatory authors.

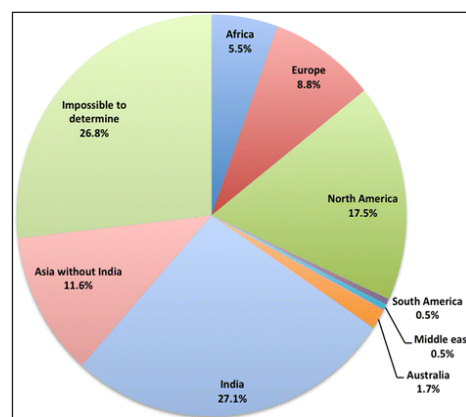


Fig. 4:

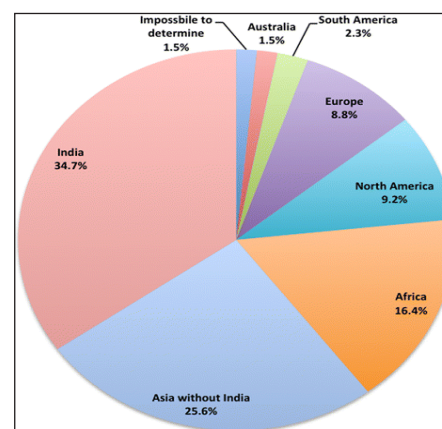


Fig. 5:

SUGGESTIONS

We need to sow compatible, persistent, formal, review based seeds in our scholarly author minds so that they will remain safe from the plague of plagiarism. Like all predators

predatory publishers are looking for feeding grounds, so authors should remain vigilant to fall prey to such platforms. Let all of us join hands together to give a big punch to them and eradicate predatory publishing from the scholarly world.

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