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Extent of publishing in predatory journals by academics in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe: A case study of a university

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\textbf{ABSTRACT}

The publish or perish concept requires academics to ensure that they take part in research and publish the research results in academic journals. The emergence of predatory publishers has led to negativity in the scholarly publishing process. Some researchers are unaware that some publishers are unethical. A study was conducted to determine the extent of predatory publishing in Zimbabwe among academics. A survey was carried out using a multi-method approach at a public university in Zimbabwe. Articles published between 2012 and 2022 were retrieved using the Harzing publish or perish software. In total, 977 articles were retrieved, and after data cleaning using Open Refine, 357 records were analyzed using the journal evaluation rubric and scoring sheet to note the extent of predatory publishing among the various schools. The articles were then classified into 3 sections i.e., predatory, not predatory, and borderline. The findings revealed that predatory publishing is prevalent in the social sciences. The authors recommend the importance of training to create awareness about the dangers of predatory publishing and how to avoid them to improve the scholarly output of the institution, which is key to university ranking.

\textbf{Introduction}

The pressure to publish has influenced both scholars and publishers (Eriksson and Helgesson 2016; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Shuva and Taisir 2016). Scholarly publishing is a venerated practice in the academe. The old adage “publish or perish” reverberates in the academe more today than before (Eriksson and Helgesson 2016; Nwagwu 2016; Omobowale et al. 2014). The main drivers of the pressure to publish are bibliometrics, which steer the career growth of academics and institutional ranking (Beall
The phenomenal growth in scholarly publishing is evident in the quantum of knowledge databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. Until recently, the standard practice has been to publish in traditional journals known for academic rigor implemented through the venerated peer review system (Mehrpour and Mhajavi 2014; Mouton and Valentine 2017). However, it is worth noting that some scholars have questioned the impact of peer review as a mechanism to guarantee quality (Bruce et al. 2016; Jefferson et al. 2007).

The business model for traditional academic journals has mostly been the “reader-pays” model through subscriptions. This model has presented challenges in terms of access to scholarly articles, particularly in resource-limited contexts, limiting the reach of research findings and thereby exacerbating the information gap among nations (Djuric 2015; Eykens, Guns, and Engels 2018; Olivarez et al. 2018). It is now well established that open access (OA) publishing emerged as an attempt to circumvent traditional obstacles to access and widen the reach of research findings (Djuric 2015; Eriksson and Helgesson 2016; Olivarez et al. 2018; Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018). OA is hailed for removing price barriers (subscriptions) and permission barriers (copyright and licensing restrictions) (Seber 2013). According to Seber (2013), OA journals (gold OA) and OA repositories (green OA) are two primary vehicles for delivering OA to research articles. Within the gold OA realm, OA journals are an alternative publishing medium to traditional journals (Beall 2012; Seethapathy, Santhosh Kumar, and Hareesha 2016; Shen and Björk 2015). OA journals are electronic and online and offer free access to readers (Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018; Seber 2013). For OA journals, the business model shifts from readers to authors and author-sponsors (Beall 2012; Djuric 2015; Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018; Seethapathy, Santhosh Kumar, and Hareesha 2016). This is commonly known as the “author-pays” model. However, Seber (2013) points out that it is a common misunderstanding to assume that all OA journals use the author-pays model or that this is their only business model.

It is important to point out that the OA journal model has been successful over time (Djuric 2015; Laakso et al. 2011). This led to the founding of the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) in 2003 (Bowman 2014). There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of journals indexed in DOAJ (Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018). As of June 2022, DOAJ included 17 939 journals and 7 703 156 articles (DOAJ 2022). However, OA journals have not been without blemishes (Beall 2012; Laakso et al. 2011). The major blemish is the emergence of “predatory publishing” (Beall 2012). The term “predatory publishing” was coined in 2010. A consensus definition of the term was reached in 2019. The consensus definition reached was predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and
are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices” (Grudniewicz et al. 2019).

Beall (2012), ratified by Bowman (2014), Xia (2015), and Djuric (2015), succinctly describes traits of predatory publishing as counterfeit journals, dishonesty, a lack of transparency, and the aim of duping scholars for the purpose of making money. The major shortfall of predatory journals is that they do not undertake any peer review or only do superficial peer review (Butler 2013; IAP 2022; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Petrişor 2017). Beall (2012, 1) asserts that “now there is a journal willing to accept every article, as long as the author is willing to pay.” This is inimical to the academe and antithetical to the tenets of integrity in scholarship. Extant literature chronicles the response to predatory publishing. There are two types of studies on the subject. The first category has focused on the nature and dynamics of predatory publishing (Bohannon 2013; Bowman 2014; Djuric 2015; Kimoto 2019; Lukic’ et al. 2014; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018; Petrişor 2017; Shen and Björk 2015; Shrestha et al. 2018; Xia et al. 2015). The second category comprises editorials and commentaries in journals (Beall 2012; Butler 2013; Gao and Zhou 2017; Švab and Makivić 2015). Extant literature shows that most of the articles published in predatory journals are mainly from countries in Africa and Asia (Nwagwu 2016; Omobowale et al. 2014; Shrestha et al. 2018; Shuva and Taisir 2016; Xia et al. 2015). However, empirical studies in Africa are scant, with a few studies in South Africa (Mouton and Valentine 2017) and Nigeria (Omobowale et al. 2014). No studies are known to have been conducted in Zimbabwe. Given the negative impact of predatory publishing on the integrity of the academe, it is important to understand its extent in Zimbabwe. Other countries, such as South Africa, have introduced a list of accredited journals for tenure and promotion (University of Johannesburg 2023), which are recognized and researchers should publish in those journals for promotion and tenure. This supports initiatives to curb the practice of predatory publishing in the research community across the country. The objective of this study was to determine the extent of articles authored by university scholars in predatory journals at an institution of higher learning. The research questions were:

(a) What is the proportion of research papers published in predatory journals?
(b) What are the strategies used by predatory publishers to entice authors?
(c) How can authors avoid predatory publishing?
Conceptual framework

The concept of predatory publishing arises from OA publishing when the norms and ethos of scholarly publishing are willingly violated. Predatory journals and publishers are “those that exploit the gold OA model to profit from scholarly publishing in a dishonest way” (Beall 2016, 2). Another term that has been used is pseudo-journals (McGlynn 2013). Eriksson and Helgesson (2016) place predatory journals within the broader realm of what they call the “false academy.” The dichotomy of predatory publishing consists of fraudulent journals that lure scholars to publish with them and, secondly, complicit scholars who take advantage of the easy publishing offered by predatory journals for their own benefit (Beall 2016; Eriksson and Helgesson 2016). The intention to deceive and defraud by predatory journals is very evident in the use of fake journal metrics, excessive acceptance rates, and extremely short turnaround times (Eykens, Guns, and Engels 2018; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Petrișor 2017).

The major challenge is that predatory journals do not follow the standards of the scholarly publishing industry (Beall 2016; Butler 2013; Eriksson and Helgesson 2016). As such, they can be identified based on their characteristics. Characteristics of predatory journals are at variance with the “Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing”, a set of 16 principles agreed upon by DOAJ, the Committee on Publishing Ethics (COPE), the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, and the World Association of Medical Editors (Eykens, Guns, and Engels 2018). Good practice in scholarly publishing is expected to abide by these principles. Deviations from these principles are an indicator of bad practice that can be associated with predatory journals. Thus, the identification of predatory journals is based on noncompliance with the “principles of good practice in scholarly publishing.”

Characteristics of predatory journals have been established based on the following: business model, type of publisher, origin of papers, journal title, time to publication, number of papers published, peer review, journal metrics, stature of editorial board, quality of website, and contact information (Beall 2015; Mehrpour and Mhajavi 2014; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Shrestha et al. 2018). A predatory journal is identified by evaluating these parameters against standard publishing practices. The most well-known characteristics are Beall’s, 2015 Criteria for Determining Predatory Open Access Publisher’s. These include 25 criteria for determining whether a publication is predatory (Beall 2015). The criteria are grouped into four categories: editor and staff; business management; integrity; and other. Each category contains a set of criteria that can be used to evaluate a journal’s standing with reference to the category.
The most difficult problem in identifying a predatory journal is finding a consensual list of predatory journals. Several approaches are used to identify predatory journals. The most widely used by researchers is Beall’s blacklist (Berger and Cirasella 2015; Djuric 2015; Lukic´ et al. 2014; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Shen and Björk 2015; Wallace and Perri 2018; Xia 2015). Beall’s blacklist is a list of “potential, possible, or probable” predatory OA journals. Beall’s list was taken down in 2017 and archived elsewhere (http://beallslist.weebly.com). Beall’s list has been heavily criticized for methodological flaws, Beall’s bias against OA, discrimination against developing countries, and as an onslaught on academic freedom (Al-Khatib 2016; Kimotho 2019; Strielkowski 2017b; Teixeira da Silva 2017).

Cabell’s blacklist has become an alternative on the academic publication market after Beall’s List (Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018; Strielkowski 2017a). Cabell’s blacklist is a list of predatory journals and, unlike Beall’s list, is available on a subscription basis. It uses 65 criteria to blacklist predatory journals. However, Cabell’s list has not yet found traction in research, and Strielkowski (2017b) ascribes this to the commercial nature of the service. Given the difficulty of agreeing on a consensual list of predatory journals, the extant literature recommends triangulation of methods (Olivarez et al. 2018). For example, DOAJ is a whitelist that has been used to identify journals in good standing (Mouton and Valentine 2017; Olivarez et al. 2018; Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018). It must be pointed out that the use of the terms “blacklists” and “whitelists” is problematic and unreliable. The work of Strinzel et al. (2019) attests to this observation. As such, these terms are used in this study only as they are presented in some literature.

Journal metrics, such as standard measures of impact factors, have also been used to identify predatory journals (Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018). SCImago journal rankings (SJR) by Elsevier and journal citation reports (JCR) by Clarivate Analytics are databases that have been used to identify predatory journals (Djuric 2015; Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018). Predatory journals tend to manipulate bibliometrics, provide fake impact factors, or create dubious metrics (Djuric 2015; Shrestha et al. 2018). Shrestha et al. (2018) provide a list of available fake metrics used by predatory journals.

**Methodology**

The approaches and methods to identify predatory journals have been subjected to heavy criticism, such that it is difficult to define an authoritative and consensual list of predatory journals (Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018). Beall’s, DOAJ’s, and Cabell’s lists are not free of critics (Bohannon 2013; Kimotho 2019; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018; Petrişor 2017). Methodologies used in this type of study are in both the
post-positivist and interpretivist paradigms. They include empirical qualitative and quantitative studies (Perlin, Imasato, and Borenstein 2018). A multimethod approach was used in this study. The population of the study was the researchers of a university in Zimbabwe, where those who published from 2012 to 2022 were part of the study. Data were collected using the Harzing publish or perish software, where papers available on Google Scholar were retrieved using the institutional name as the keyword to show where the authors were affiliated during the time of publication. Google Scholar was used since it indexes all the journal articles, whether predatory or authentic. The data were saved in a CSV file, including all the bibliographic details of the published papers. A total of 977 records were retrieved, and the data were cleaned using Open Refine software to remove blank sections and records without a year of publication or journal names. After data cleaning, 357 records remained, and these records were analyzed using the checklist that was created after doing a literature review to identify predatory practices and how to differentiate good from bad journals. The checklist was also adapted from the journal evaluation tool developed by Rele et al. (2017), as shown in Table 1.

Using the data, a list of all the journals in which the scholars had published in the period under review was compiled. The following information was collected for each journal title based on information available on its website: where the journal was indexed, discipline, impact metrics, and publishers. Identification of a journal as predatory or not was done using multiple criteria, and a checklist for evaluating journals was used. The criteria included website quality, standing of the associated publisher, claims about indexing databases, composition of the editorial board, quality of copyediting, veracity and completeness of contact information, and the article processing charges (IAP 2022; Lukić’ et al. 2014; Mehrpour and Mhajavi 2014; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Rele, Kennedy, and Blas 2017). Based on multiple criteria, each journal was placed in one of three categories adapted from Mouton and Valentine (2017). The categories were not predatory, predatory, and borderline cases. Not predatory referred to a journal that satisfied standard publishing practices as outlined in extant literature (Eykens, Guns, and Engels 2018; IAP 2022; Mehrpour and Mhajavi 2014; Mouton and Valentine 2017). Predatory journals are those that exhibit numerous predatory publishing practices and characteristics, and journals with fake attributes were regarded as predatory (Beall 2015; Mehrpour and Mhajavi 2014; Mouton and Valentine 2017; Petrișor 2017). The borderline journals were difficult to classify either way due to weak evidence. For example, incompleteness or inaccuracy of information on the editorial board may be just poor or sloppy editorial practices (Mouton and Valentine 2017). Such journals were said to possess borderline, uncertain, contested, and/or ambiguous legitimacy characteristics (Siler 2020). An Assistant Librarian, Sub-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Not predatory (3)</th>
<th>Borderline (2)</th>
<th>Predatory (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Web search for the journal</td>
<td>The journal is within the top 5 entries on the first page of the search results, and there are no scam alert postings.</td>
<td>The journal is on the first page of the search results but not within the top 5 entries and there are no scam alert postings.</td>
<td>The journal is on the first page of search results, or there is at least one scam alert post about the journal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal name</td>
<td>It cannot be confused with another journal.</td>
<td>The journal has a name like another journal but can be distinguished.</td>
<td>Unable to distinguish it from another journal with the same name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>The scope of the journal is well defined and clearly stated.</td>
<td>The scope is not clear.</td>
<td>Broader scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial board</td>
<td>The editorial board is listed with their full names and institutional affiliations.</td>
<td>The editorial board is listed with their full names only.</td>
<td>There is no editorial board listed, or those listed are non-existent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact information</td>
<td>Contact information is formal. Affiliation with an established scholarly society.</td>
<td>Contact information is non-professional and non-journal related.</td>
<td>No contact email address.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Well designed and functional with no broken links, easy navigation, and no missing information.</td>
<td>Adequately designed with passable functionality, such as a few broken links, and some missing information.</td>
<td>Poorly designed and is not functional with broken links, poor navigation, and missing information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review process</td>
<td>The journal states whether it is peer reviewed and has a review policy.</td>
<td>The journal states whether it is peer reviewed and has no policy listed.</td>
<td>The journal does not state whether it is peer reviewed and has no review policy listed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict of interest</td>
<td>The journal clearly states a conflict-of-interest policy and how to handle such conflicts.</td>
<td>The journal states the policy without providing information on how to handle it.</td>
<td>The journal does not state any conflicts of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal archive</td>
<td>There is an archive of past issues with links to full texts.</td>
<td>There is an archive, which may be incomplete without links to full texts.</td>
<td>There is no archive of past issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication schedule</td>
<td>It clearly states how often its issues will be published each year, and this agrees with the archive.</td>
<td>It does not state how often its issues will be published but can be determined from the archive.</td>
<td>It does not state how often its issues are published each year and cannot be determined from the archive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article processing charges</td>
<td>Charges for publishing are easily found and clearly explained.</td>
<td>It states that author fees are required but does not note how much they are.</td>
<td>Fees that are affordable but charged through a third party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnaround time</td>
<td>The timelines are clearly stated on the website and are realistic enough to allow peer review.</td>
<td>The timelines are not clearly stated on the website to check if there is peer review.</td>
<td>Unrealistic turnaround time from submission to publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher information</td>
<td>Information about the ownership or management of the journal and contact information is clearly identified.</td>
<td>Information about the ownership or management of the journal and contact information are not clearly identified.</td>
<td>Information about the ownership or management of the journal and contact information about the publisher are not available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexing</td>
<td>Indexed in legitimate abstracting and indexing databases.</td>
<td>Not indexed in legitimate abstracting and indexing databases.</td>
<td>Fake indexing information and claim that it is indexed in legitimate indexing databases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Table 1. (Continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Not predatory (3)</th>
<th>Borderline (2)</th>
<th>Predatory (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author instructions</td>
<td>The author guidelines are clear and available on the website.</td>
<td>The author’s guidelines are available but not easy to follow.</td>
<td>The author guidelines are hidden and difficult to find on the website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>Policies are available, and rights for reuse of content are clearly explained.</td>
<td>There are no clear policies on retraction, corrections, or plagiarism.</td>
<td>No policies on retraction, corrections, or plagiarism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Member of COPE, OASPA, STM, etc.</td>
<td>There is no mention of membership.</td>
<td>Claim to be a member of COPE, OASPA, or AMT when it is not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript handling process</td>
<td>The publication process is clear.</td>
<td>The manuscript handling policy is not clear.</td>
<td>A description of the manuscript handling process is lacking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript submission</td>
<td>Use of an online submission system.</td>
<td>Use both the online submission system and professional emails.</td>
<td>Use of unprofessional e-mail to submit articles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSN</td>
<td>ISSN is available, and validity can be checked on the ISSN portal.</td>
<td>ISSN is available but not on the website.</td>
<td>No ISSN or ISSN is available but not on the ISSN portal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from the Journal Evaluation Tool, Rele, Kennedy, and Blas 2017).

Librarian and the Deputy Librarian were assigned to categorize journals using the checklist in Table 1. Where there were some differences, the librarians and the authors came together to confirm and agree on the classification of the journals as a way of ensuring the reliability of the data. Microsoft Excel was used to categorize the classifications and develop graphs and figures for presenting the findings.

Scoring sheet

60–41: The journal meets many of the evaluation criteria for credibility. 40–31: The journal meets some of the evaluation criteria for credibility. 30–20: The journal meets the fewest of the evaluation criteria for credibility.

Results and discussion

The schools studied were anonymized after arranging the abbreviations alphabetically for confidentiality purposes. The findings revealed that there were some researchers who were publishing in predatory journals, mainly targeting those that promised a fast and easy publication process, as noted on the websites of those journals. This can be attributed to the pressure to publish using the “publish or perish” concept that has been put on academics, as pointed out by Eriksson and Helgesson (2016), Shuva and Taisir (2016), and Mouton and Valentine (2017). Figure 1 shows the classification of the journals studied, which indicated that there is a high prevalence of predatory publishing in the social sciences field and that there was no change
over time in the number of articles published in these predatory journals. The classification was based on publishing practices as pointed out by Lukic´ et al. (2014), Mehrpour and Mhajavi (2014), Beall (2015), Mouton and Valentine (2017), and Petrișor (2017). The first author was considered when classifying articles where there was more than one author from different schools within the same institution. It was noted that in the hard sciences (natural or physical sciences), researchers were publishing in authentic journals that are Scopus, Web of Science (Clarivate), and DOAJ indexed. Except for two schools (Schools E and F), researchers in all the other schools were predominantly publishing in credible journals, as shown in Table 2. The category L represents journal articles that had no author from the institution under study but were citing the institution; under category M, the website didn’t open, and it was difficult to classify the journals.

The social sciences researchers were also publishing in the journals that were classified as borderline, where most of them have websites but do not show the pertinent information that is required to evaluate a journal. Most of these journals did not show whether they are indexed or are in the process of applying for indexing, and it was difficult to get information from the home page. School F had the highest rate of predatory journals, followed by school A, as shown in Figure 1. School B recorded a zero percent because no journal title was classified under that school in all categories.

From the list of papers classified as predatory journals, it was observed that predatory publishers used a variety of strategies to entice authors to submit manuscripts for publication, i.e., aggressive ways to recruit editors and writers. The fast publication process is enabled by the lack of peer review, whereby the papers submitted are accepted as they are and are put online. The names of the journals would look familiar with a list of editorial board

![Prevalence of predatory publishing](image)

*Figure 1. Prevalence of predatory publishing in schools.*
members who are well credentialed professionals, as shown on the websites of journals that were classified as predatory. The predatory journals also used names that are slightly different from those that are indexed in good indexing databases, which confuses the authors. They used fake impact factors, which show that the journals were highly rated and sometimes indicate that they were indexed in good indexing sites such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Scopus, and Web of Science, among others. In most cases, these journals benefit from new authors who are in a race to publish papers, be it to graduate or to get promoted. This is in line with what was stated by Djuric (2015), Shrestha et al. (2018), and IAP (2022), who referred to the use of fake impact factors by predatory publishers. It was noted that predatory publishers ride on the open access publishing model, where they charge authors article processing charges (APCs) to make the articles freely available. Their aim in charging APCs is to get money from authors and not to run the publication of the manuscripts since they would lack scholarly credibility.

To avoid predatory publishing, it is suggested that authors know and understand the publishing process, especially the peer review process. They should avoid journals that promise quick publication as well as unrealistic timelines and should question such unethical publishing practices before sending their manuscripts. This was supported by Mouton and Valentine (2017), Petrişor (2017), and Eykens et al. (2018), who indicated that authors are promised a short publication time with a turnaround time of around 7 days to publication after submitting a manuscript. Authors should know the red flags to deal with the problematic issues of predatory publishing. These include, but are not limited to, no indexing, editors with subject areas that do not match the journal scope and aims, guaranteeing that one will get through peer review, demanding payment of the article processing charge before the journal is accepted for publication, poor grammar, spelling, or punctuation,
and unsolicited mail requesting one to publish outside the area of expertise. This was also stated by Butler (2013), Beall (2016), Eriksson and Helgesson (2016), and Eykens et al. (2018), who indicated that some publishers do not follow standards of scholarly publishing and are not members of the Committee on Publishing Ethics (COPE), the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA), or the International Association of Scientific, Technical, and Medical Publishers (STM). Some journals have misleading metrics and have hijacked titles that look more like the actual original journals that are authentic. Some guaranteed acceptances of the papers submitted by authors would be posted on their websites. Authors should know the tactics employed by predatory publishers and evaluate such journals before submitting their manuscripts for publication. Authors should also work with librarians to get assistance with the evaluation process if they face challenges or lack the skills to evaluate journals and publishers.

**Limitations of the study**

This was a case study of one higher education institution in Zimbabwe, and it would be difficult to generalize the findings to other institutions since they might have different modalities for dealing with predatory publishing. These results therefore apply to this one institution, and there is a need for developing institutional policies that would assist in curbing predatory publishing at the institutional level.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

It can be concluded that some researchers were publishing in predatory journals because of a lack of knowledge and skills on how to evaluate journals, while others ignored the importance of publishing in authentic journals. This is more prevalent in the social sciences, where most authors target journals that promise to publish the manuscript within 10 days of submission. These journals offered a fast and easy publication process with no peer review if the author was able to pay the article processing charge. The authors recommend that researchers be able to evaluate the journals before submitting their manuscripts for publication. In circumstances when they are not too sure about the evaluation process, they should work closely with the academic librarians to get assistance in choosing authentic journals.

Authors should also be aware of predatory practices and try to avoid such journals when considering potential journals to publish their manuscripts. Academic librarians should also roll out workshops, seminars, and other discussion forums to create awareness about the dangers of predatory publishing and its effects on authors. There is also a need to create
awareness among researchers about the strategies that are used by predatory publishers to get the attention of authors and entice them to submit their manuscripts for publication. This would assist in eliminating the problematic issue of predatory publishing since some journals might portray themselves as authentic when they are not. Mentorship programs where senior researchers assist early career researchers would be helpful in dealing with predatory publishing. Authors should also desist from being in a hurry to publish and should be able to use all the resources available to assess the journals before sending their manuscripts.

Researchers are encouraged not to rely on watch and safe lists, which can be imperfect in the process of choosing appropriate journals. Institutions, researchers, and librarians should take note of the recommendations made by the InterAcademy Partnership as a way of combating predatory publishing (IAP 2022). Researchers should practice due diligence to minimize the risk and stop citing predatory journals. They should also take note that there is no one check that would provide a definite answer, but they should put all the evidence together and consider it before submitting a manuscript for publication. Institutions should train researchers and inform them of the dangers of predatory publishing while at the same time excluding those papers from promotions. This should be implemented as a matter of policy. Library schools should also provide training and raise awareness of predatory publishing among library and information science students, who would then assist researchers when they become librarians. The librarians would be able to offer trainings looking into the peer-review process and highlighting the red flags used by predatory publishers.

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