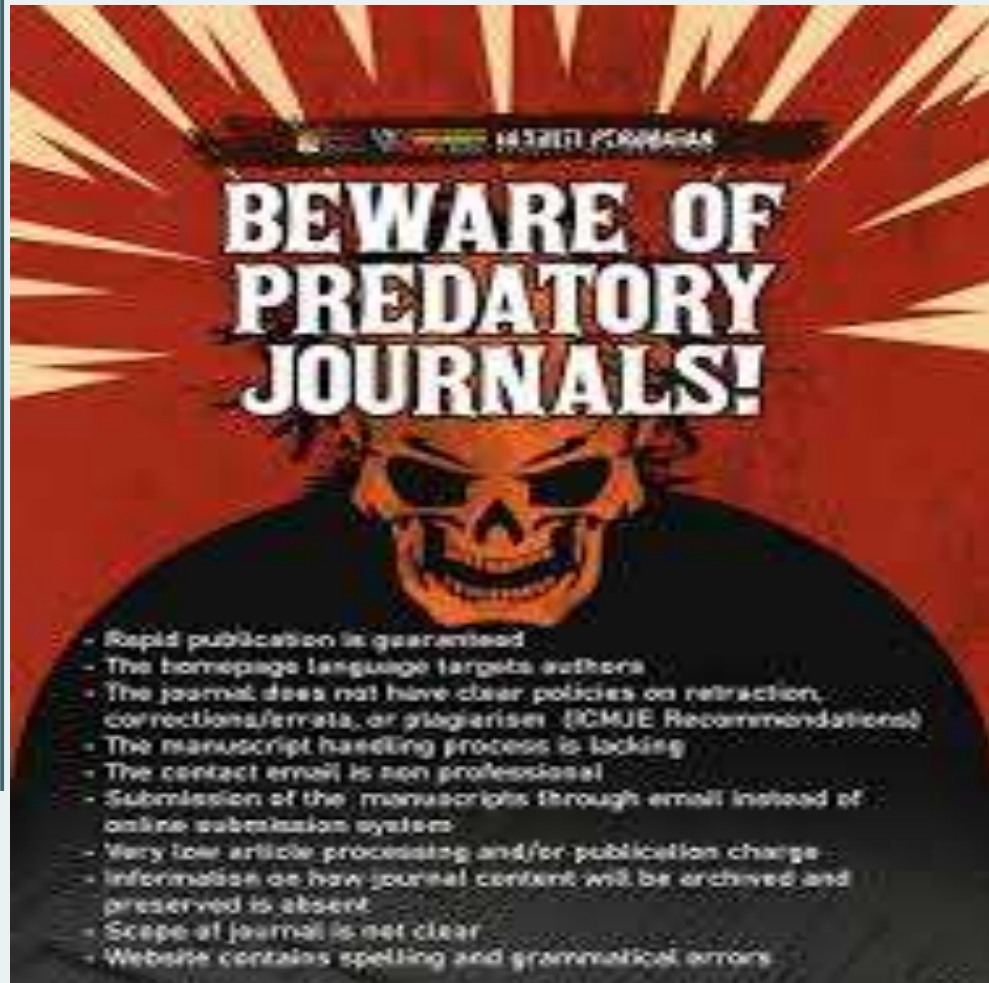


Title: Unmasking Predatory and Hijacked Journals and Publishers: Safeguarding Academic Integrity



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Outline of the presentation

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- 3. Definitions (Predatory vs. Hijacked)**
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Objectives of the Presentation

- Define predatory and hijacked journals.
 - Examine their impact on academic integrity.
 - Provide global, African, and Zimbabwean perspectives.
 - Equip researchers with tools to identify and avoid them.
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- **Why This Workshop Matters**
 - Researchers should be aware of predatory journals, publishers and conferences
 - Predatory journals exploit researchers for profit, damaging credibility.
 - Hijacked journals impersonate legitimate ones, deceiving scholars.
 - Zimbabwean researchers are vulnerable due to pressure to publish.

Introduction



- Predatory journals are a concern for many. (young researchers, seasoned researchers and honest generality –consumers)
- They are menacing, fraudulent phenomena that have a destructive impact on scientific research.
- Honest scientists stand to lose the most in this unethical quagmire.
- When a researcher's work is published alongside articles that are plagiarised, that report on conclusions gained from unsound methodologies or that contain altered photographic figures, it becomes tainted by association (Beall, 2012).
- This can potentially influence decisions in a damaging way. (Using a wrong prescription in the medical field)
- A researcher should not be shocked to see their submitted work published once they have paid the author fee, with no comment or correction made to their work.
- Traditionally, peer-reviewed journals play the role of gatekeeper, signalling that the accepted work makes a scholarly contribution and assisting indirectly in the evaluation of hiring and tenure decisions.



Definitions (Predatory vs. Hijacked)

- **Predatory Journals**

- Predatory publishing, a term coined by Beall (2012),
- refers to unethical open-access journals that mimic legitimate publishers and exploit researchers for profit.
- These entities use aggressive tactics like phishing emails. (fraudulent messages designed to trick researchers)
- They lack clear standards and deceive academics, especially those with weak scholarly communication, into paying fees without providing proper peer review or editorial services.
- Often called questionable, illegitimate, dark, deceptive, or scam journals, they pose serious threats to academic integrity.



Hijacked Journals

Definition: is a deceptive form of academic fraud where scammers create fake websites that impersonate legitimate scholarly journals.

How They Operate:

- Clone websites: These sites often look professional and may even outrank the real journal in search results.
- They copy the real journal's name, ISSN, and metadata to appear authentic.
- Hard to detect: Even seasoned academics can be fooled due to the sophistication of these scams.
- Scientific damage: Fake articles can contaminate databases and mislead future research.
- No peer review: Submissions are accepted without proper editorial oversight, just to collect publication fees
- DOI links that don't match the journal's website.



Characteristics of predatory journal and publishers

Deceptive Practices

- **Fake Peer Review:** Claims to conduct peer review but either does not or performs a superficial check.
- **Misleading Metrics:** Invented impact factors or false indexing claims (e.g., "Indexed in Scopus" when they are not).

Many now also make false claims about having impact factors or being included in prestigious academic indexes.

- **Name Mimicking:** Titles resembling reputable journals (e.g., *Journal of Clinical Medicine* vs. *American Journal of Clinical Medicine*).
- **Aggressive** email solicitations.
- Spam emails with flattery ("We invite your esteemed research...").
- Quick acceptance guarantees (e.g., "Publish in 2 weeks!").
- Poor website quality (grammar errors, lack of contact details).



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Lack of Transparency

- No clear editorial board or listed experts with fake affiliations.
- Hidden or exorbitant Article Processing Charges (APCs).
- Poor website quality (grammatical errors, broken links, no ISSN).

Exploitation of the Open Access (OA) Model

- Legitimate OA journals charge APCs but provide real peer review and indexing.
- Predatory journals take fees without proper services.
- *“Some researchers are able to recognise predatory publishers from a mile away. Their emails often range from overtly to mildly suspicious. But spotting them is becoming harder and harder”. (Culley, 2021).*

They change their colours like a chameleon to suit the environment.



Characteristics of Hijacked Journals

- These journals are more dangerous than typical predatory publishers because they hijack the reputation of trusted publications.
- **Impersonation:** They clone the name, ISSN, and branding of legitimate journals to appear authentic.

Fake Websites: These sites often outrank the real journal in search results and may include fabricated editorial boards.

- **No Peer Review:** Articles are accepted without proper review, often within days, just to collect fees.
- **Broad Scope:** They claim to publish in all disciplines, showing no academic focus or specialisation.
- **False Indexing & Metrics:** They advertise bogus impact factors and claim indexing in reputable databases like Scopus or Web of Science.
- **Rapid Publication & Payment Demands:** Authors receive quick acceptance letters followed by invoices for article processing charges (APCs).

How Predatory Publishing Differs from Legitimate Publishing



| Feature | Legitimate Journal | Predatory Journal |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Peer Review | Rigorous, transparent, and slow. | None or fake ("peer review in 3 days"). |
| Indexing | Listed in Scopus, PubMed, DOAJ, WoS. | Fake claims or no real indexing. |
| Editorial Board | Reputable scholars with verifiable profiles. | Fake names or copied from other journals. |
| APC/Fees | Clear, justified, and often waivers available. | Hidden fees or sudden extra charges. |
| Publication Speed | Months (due to proper review). | Days or weeks (no real review). |



Global Perspective: International Cooperation and Standards

- Predatory and hijacked journals pose a serious threat to scholarly integrity worldwide.
- These exploitative platforms bypass rigorous peer review, misrepresent editorial boards,
- They charge exorbitant fees for rapid publication—undermining trust in academic publishing.
- **Global efforts to combat this menace include:**
- **InterAcademy Partnership (IAP):** A global consortium of over 140 academies that published a comprehensive report recommending tools, awareness campaigns, and policy reforms.
- **Think. Check. Submit. Initiative:** A global campaign helping researchers identify trustworthy journals through a checklist-based approach.
- **Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE):** Provides ethical guidelines and resources for publishers and editors to uphold integrity.
- **Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ):** Maintains a vetted list of legitimate open-access journals, helping researchers avoid predatory outlets.

Global Impact



- As of the most recent estimates, **there are over 16,100 predatory journals** globally, and the number continues to rise each month.
- These journals publish tens of thousands of articles annually,
- Some even infiltrating respected databases like Scopus—where more than **300 potentially predatory journals** contributed over **160,000 articles in just three years**, accounting for nearly **3% of indexed studies**.
- **Consequences:**
 - Wasted research funds.
 - Loss of academic credibility.
 - Misleading scientific literature.



Continental Perspective: Africa's Response and Advocacy

- Young and inexperienced researchers from developing countries typically have been found to have published in predatory journals (Frandsen, 2017; Nobes, Harris, 2019; Shen, Björk, 2015; Truth, 2012; Xia et al., 2015).
- With the situation in Africa shown to be particularly challenging
- According to Kurt (2018), “predatory publishers have become another way in which people in the developing world are victimised.”
- Africa faces unique challenges in the fight against predatory publishing, including limited funding, pressure to publish, and lack of awareness (Nwagwu, 2015).

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Africa's Response to Predatory Journals

- Increased awareness through university workshops and webinars
- Institutions now screen and reject predatory publications
- Collaboration with global ethical bodies like COPE and DOAJ
- Advocacy for fair recognition of African scholarship
- Challenges with indexing and mislabelling of local journals
- Publishing in such outlets harms reputation and wastes research



Common Challenges

- Pressure to publish for career advancement.
- Limited access to publishing literacy and training.
- Exploitation of open access models by fraudulent actors.
- High prevalence of predatory journals targeting early-career researchers.
- Limited institutional support for journal vetting.

Examples:

- South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya report high submissions to predatory journals.
- Fake conferences also target African researchers.

Regional Initiatives



- **African Journals Online (AJOL):** A trusted platform indexing peer-reviewed African journals.
- **Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf):** Leads awareness campaigns and Open Science initiatives to improve journal quality and visibility.
- **AfricArXiv:** A free preprint repository promoting ethical publishing and collaboration among African scholars.
- **AuthorAID (INASP):** Offers mentorship and training to African researchers on ethical publishing practices.
- South African universities actively promote publishing in credible journals by maintaining curated lists of approved titles and offering incentives to researchers.
- **Accredited Journal Lists:** Institutions use the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) list, which includes journals indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, DOAJ, IBSS, SciELO SA, and the Norwegian List
- **University Guidelines:** Schools like Stellenbosch, UCT, and UJ provide searchable databases and spreadsheets to help researchers choose reputable journals.
- **Publication Incentives:** Researchers who publish in these accredited journals often receive financial rewards, promotion points, or research funding.



Local perspective on Zimbabwe's Situation

Local Studies & Findings

- A 2023 study at Chinhoyi University found predatory publishing prevalent in social sciences, often due to a lack of awareness and pressure to publish.
- The **Zimbabwe Young Academy of Sciences** recommends creating a national database of accredited journals and eliminating volume-based faculty assessments.
- Currently, University librarians are collaborating in carrying out a study on predatory publishing.



Institutional Actions

Publishing Pressures:

- Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) mandates publications for promotions.
- Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ) and Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) are working toward ethical publishing frameworks and journal vetting systems.
- Use Research4Life for free/reduced-cost access to credible journals.
- Use Harzing's Publish or Perish software to analyse journal citations.

Known Cases:

- Zimbabwean researchers unknowingly published in OMICS and other predatory publishers.
- Hijacked journals mimicking local journals (e.g., *Zimbabwe Journal of Science and Technology*).

Institutional Responses:

- Some universities (e.g., UZ, NUST) provide guidance but need stricter policies.
- Consult university librarians or research offices for journal vetting.
- Avoid journals not indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, or DOAJ.

How to Identify and Avoid Predatory Journals

Red Flags to Watch

✓ Checklists:

- Is the journal indexed in **Scopus, Web of Science, or DOAJ**?
- Does it have a **clear peer-review process**?
- Are the contact details and editorial board verifiable?
- **Trusted Resources**

Whitelists:

- Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
- Scopus/Web of Science-indexed journals

Blacklists:

- Cabells' Predatory Reports
- Beall's List (archived but still referenced)

Popular websites and platforms that have been used to spot predatory Journals include

- Kscien's list of predatory journals <https://kscien.org/>
- 2. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
<https://doaj.org/search/journals>
- 3. Think, Check and Submit <http://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
- 4. Publons' Journal List which is also a positive and dynamic alternative
to Beall's list <https://publons.com/journal/>
- Another option comes from librarians Sarah Beaubien and Max Eckard. Open Access Journal Quality Indicators
- Retraction Watch Hijacked journal Checker
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ak985WGOgGbJRJbZFanoktAN_UFeExpE/edit?gid=5255084#gid=5255084

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Conclusion and Recommendations

- Combating predatory and hijacked journals requires a **multi-tiered approach** involving global standards, continental collaboration, and local action
- . Governments must enforce ethical publishing policies, communities must advocate for awareness, and international bodies must continue to build tools and frameworks that protect scholarly integrity.
- Recommended Actions:
- Establish national journal accreditation systems.
- Promote open access platforms with verified peer review.
- Fund training programs for researchers and librarians.
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration between academia, government, and civil society.

Recommended Actions:

- Recommended Actions:
- For Researchers:
- Verify journals before submission.
- Use institutional library support.
- For Universities & Policymakers:
- Strengthen awareness programs.
- Develop local whitelists of credible journals.
- Final Thought:
- *"Publishing in a predatory journal doesn't just waste money—it erodes trust in science."*



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Questions and Comments

