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Editorial

AL ENCUENTRO CON

Impact of Predatory Journals on Academic Publishing: A Perspective View

Hunny Sharma

ESPECIAL

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EDITORIAL

Editorial

Por: Tatiana Morales





La edición especial FIL Guadalajara de nuestro *Boletín Tendencia Editorial* está dedicada a reflexionar sobre cómo recientemente, ciertas publicaciones académicas, a las que se les denomina revistas depredadoras, son destinadas como *papers académicos* y publicadas en índices reconocidos.

A pesar de que las revistas de acceso abierto existen desde hace un tiempo; aprovechándose del conocimiento libre en la red, se han creado “editoriales” con “revistas académicas” que han optado por publicar en condiciones antiéticas, sin realizar procesos previos de selección ni evaluación por pares, con el fin de cobrar una suma de dinero por publicar en aquellas revistas, que estarían indexadas en bases de datos reconocidas.

Lo anterior nos permite entrar en materia para comprender las implicaciones que tiene el acceso abierto en las publicaciones depredadoras. No solo porque no hay barreras ante los contenidos académicos y educativos, sino porque este auge vertiginoso lleva a malas prácticas editoriales.

En la sección **Al encuentro con**, el investigador Hunny Sharma comparte en su artículo, “Impact of Predatory Journals on Academic Publishing: A Perspective View”, las implicaciones de las revistas depredadoras en la literatura biomédica en India y cómo se puede evitar la presencia de y publicación en este tipo de revistas. En la sección de **Actualidad**, los investigadores Jesús Alejandro Castro-Martínez y Liena González-Lorenzo presentan su artículo, “Editorial depredadora (EAE): alerta de corrupción académica”, en el que analizan las manifestaciones de corrupción académica en las prácticas editoriales. Nuestro **Especial** contará con cuatro artículos: “Publishing in Predatory Journals from India: Making Sense of the Conundrum” del profesor Arghya Pal, quien describe desde su experiencia cuál es el *modus operandi* de las revistas depredadoras en países como la India. La investigadora Swati Verma en su artículo, “Insight into Plagiarism: Pseudo Research or Art of Stealing?” reflexiona acerca de las precauciones ante el plagio que debe tener un investigador al momento de publicar en revistas indexadas. Seguimos con el artículo de Mitra Channa, “Academic Publishing in India: Issues and Tribulations”, quien discute la forma en que las publicaciones se legitiman y con qué tipo de obstáculos se enfrentan aquellas que no pueden ser clasificadas como revistas indexadas. Cerramos el número con el investigador Luis Carlos Silva Aycaguer con su artículo, “Alarma en las publicaciones médicas: editoriales, revistas y congresos depredadores”, quien expone la irrupción de las llamadas *revistas y editoriales depredadoras* como parcialmente responsables de los falsos progresos científicos.

Impact of Predatory Journals on Academic Publishing: A Perspective View



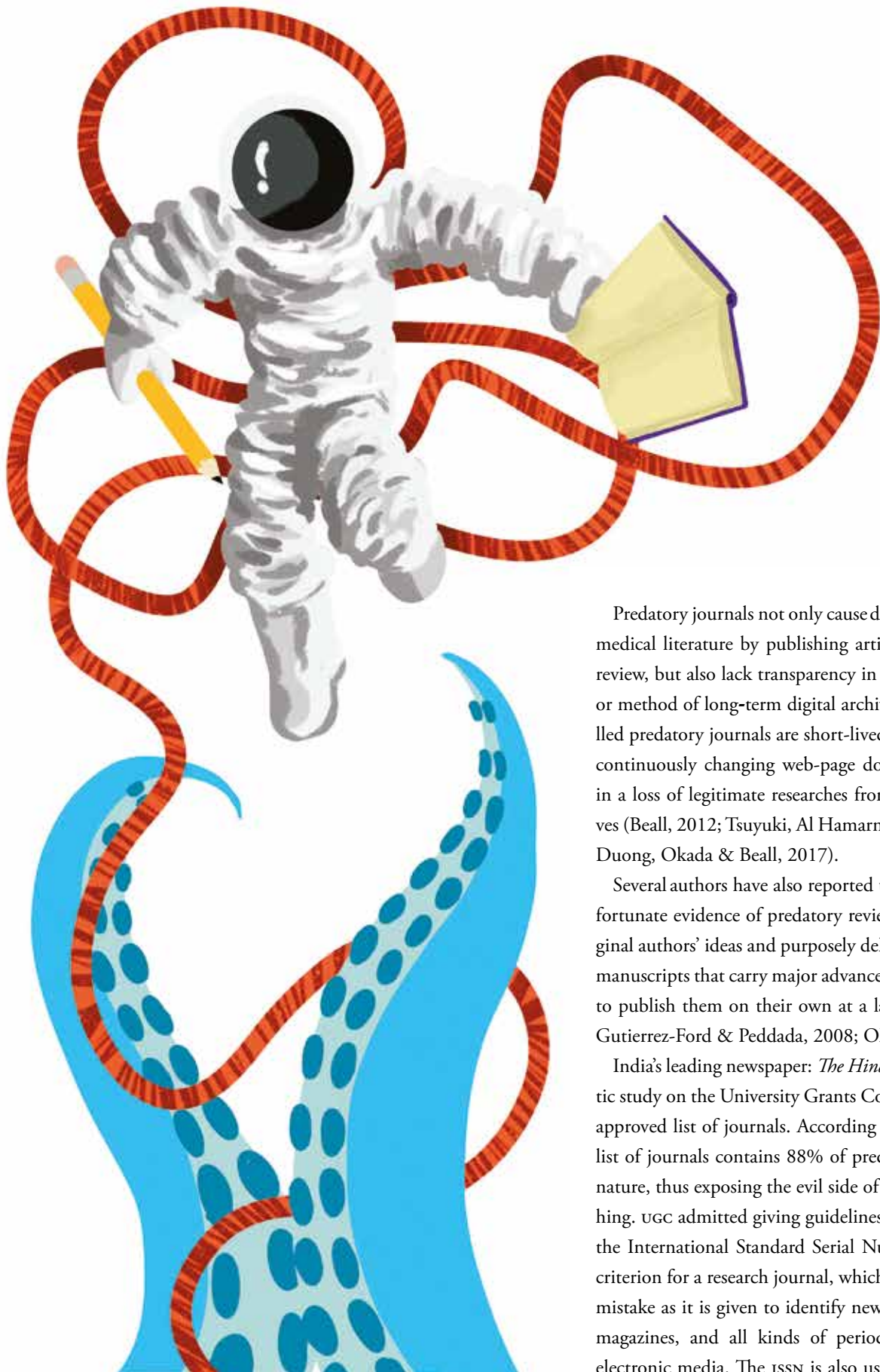
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In earlier times, authors used to feel immense gratification for publishing their work in peer-reviewed journals to satisfy their urge to uplift scientific knowledge by contributing to it and achieving fame. But the academic field's rapidly changing scenario and cut-throat competition have converted this urge to need of publication for proving higher competency among colleagues. The recent amendment in guidelines by the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the Dental Council of India (DCI) to make publications mandatory for appointments and promotions of medical teachers led to the phenomenon known as predatory publishing (Kumar & Saxena, 2016).

Merriam Webster's dictionary elaborated the term: predatory, referring to anything that is inclined or intended to injure or exploit others for personal gain or profit. Likewise, it refers to biomedical journals that solicit and prey young researchers or academicians with legitimate research, looking to quickly publish without a thorough review process. These journals for immediate personal gain or financial profit publish articles at the earliest without peer reviewing and charge high amounts in the name of article-processing charges (APCs) for open access (OA) articles, without meeting the standard publishing criteria.

Predatory publishers lure young, inexperienced researchers for submission of their work to their journals by aggressive email advertising. They are often found to be seen cloning existing legitimate journals by using a look-alike title, a cloned webpage and email ids, copied names of editors of the editorial board and even displaying fake and bogus impact factor citations and indexing (Richtig, Berger, Lange-Asschenfeldt, Aberer & Richtig, 2018).



Predatory journals not only cause degradation of biomedical literature by publishing articles without peer review, but also lack transparency in publishing policy or method of long-term digital archiving. Thus, so-called predatory journals are short-lived in nature due to continuously changing web-page domain that results in a loss of legitimate researches from vanished archives (Beall, 2012; Tsuyuki, Al Hamarneh, Bermingham, Duong, Okada & Beall, 2017).

Several authors have also reported unethical and unfortunate evidence of predatory reviewers stealing original authors' ideas and purposely delaying or rejecting manuscripts that carry major advances and innovations to publish them on their own at a later date (Resnik, Gutierrez-Ford & Peddada, 2008; Oleinik, 2014).

India's leading newspaper: *The Hindu*, run a systematic study on the University Grants Commission's (UGC) approved list of journals. According to it, UGC's white list of journals contains 88% of predatory journals in nature, thus exposing the evil side of predatory publishing. UGC admitted giving guidelines, which indicated the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) as a criterion for a research journal, which indeed was a big mistake as it is given to identify newspapers, journals, magazines, and all kinds of periodicals—print and electronic media. The ISSN is also used for bar-coding

and library classification, ordering, and distribution purpose, but it does not reflect on the quality of the journal, periodical, or monograph (Prasad, 2018; Patwardhan, 2017).

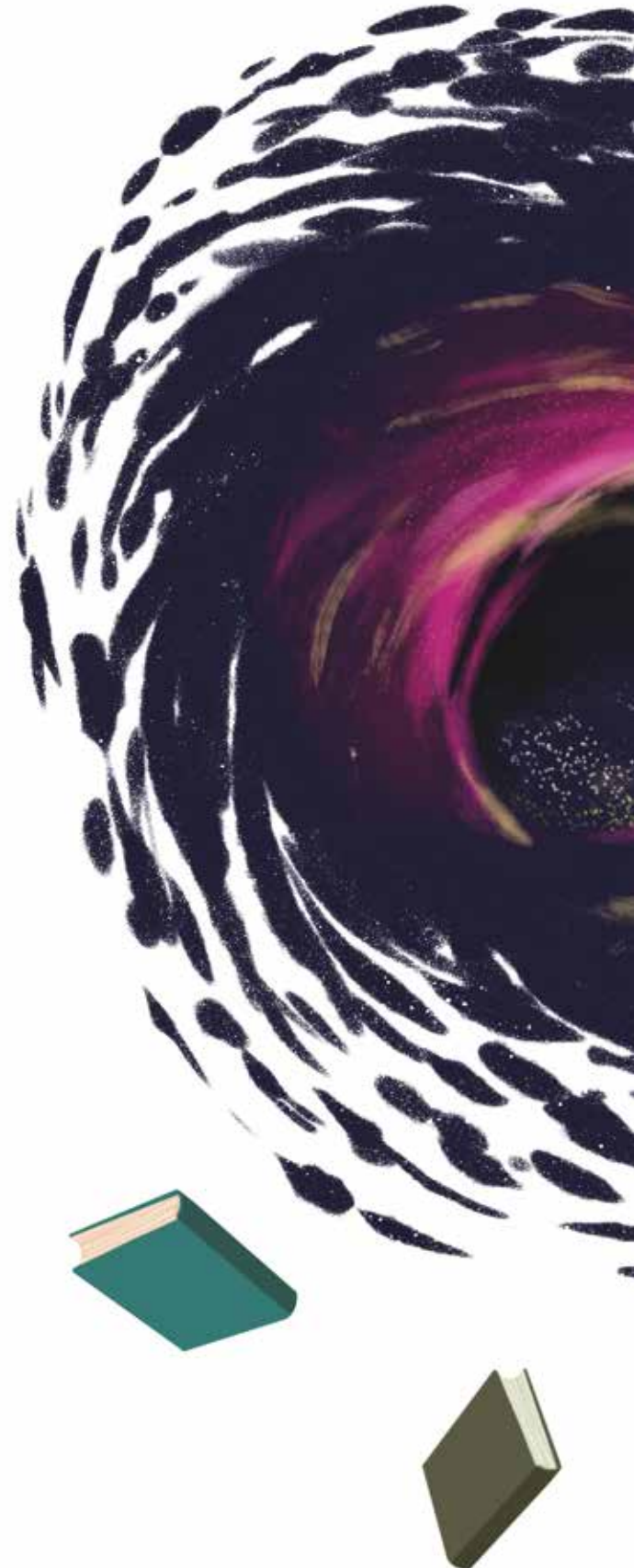
Now a legitimate and curious question arises: What can be done to stop these predatory journals from destroying biomedical science? In order to achieve knowledge about predatory journals, scientific literacy is essential. To distinguish legitimate OA journals from the predatory once, one can take steps described in the *Think. Check. Submit* initiative or look for the journals indexed in DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), which provides Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) to all the articles published in high-quality, OA, peer-reviewed journals. Last, but not the least, one may look for journals that follow standard ethical policies that are recommended or advocated by reputed organizations such as WAME, the COPE, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the Council of Science Editors (CSE) and provide each article with a printed and embed machine-readable CC licensing information and which allow the authors to hold the copyright without restrictions or hidden policies (DOAJ, 2019).

It is the need of time that instead of focusing on banning these publishers or establishing laws against them, scientific literacy and ethics should be created among researchers to make them aware about occult strategies used by these pseudo/predatory publishers. Academic institutions should make mandatory to deliver target specific courses for the postgraduate student, young untrained researchers, and faculty members to delineate legitimate journals from these predatory publishers. Active discussions should be made with politicians and government to ban not only the publishers of these predatory journals but also the individuals involved in such practices.

Through this editorial trend, we hope that academics strive to cultivate a reputation of excellence as researchers whose contributions to knowledge are high in quality and meaningful.

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Editorial depredadora (EAE):

alerta de corrupción académica



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La corrupción representa hoy una plaga de alcance mundial que retrasa el desarrollo económico, cultural, social y científico de países, instituciones sociales y grupos humanos. En palabras del científico Arrellano-Gault “el estudio de la corrupción ha sido uno de los temas que paradójicamente han sido olvidados o no están siendo estudiados como debían de serlo”. Las consideraciones sobre la corrupción han cambiado a través de la historia y entre las diferentes culturas; los criterios sobre el fenómeno social varían de una sociedad a otra. Entender que la corrupción es un fenómeno social que trasciende los marcos legalistas que la identifican con tipologías delictivas es importante para lograr aprehender de la forma más integral posible su dinámica funcional y valorarla como una relación social que genera a su vez relaciones de cooperación y participación.

Cuando nos implicamos desde las ciencias en el estudio de la corrupción nos percatamos de que en el ambiente académico se evidencian esas manifestaciones; como investigadores somos bombardeados frecuentemente con invitaciones para publicar en editoriales y revistas de dudosa procedencia. En ocasiones, además, se desconoce sobre las mismas entre los profesionales de las instituciones universitarias. Estas prácticas de las editoriales se hacen cotidianas y los profesionales pueden ser proclives a publicar en estas editoriales espurias. Lo anterior debido a que profesores e investigadores deben cumplir con exigencias institucionales para la obtención de créditos mediante publicaciones científicas.

El académico Jeffrey Beall (2012) indica que las publicaciones depredadoras son aquellas que explotan de forma poco profesional el valioso modelo de acceso abierto para su propio beneficio. Operan gracias a las presiones de la llamada “publicación por vanidad” y publican artículos a cambio del pago de los autores. Estas se caracterizan por tener varios niveles de engaño y falta de transparencia en sus operaciones.

La opción de publicar en revistas o editoriales depredadoras puede ser una variante aceptada entre los académicos y estudiantes postgraduados; en determinados contextos se legitiman socialmente como validas expresiones sutiles de corrupción en estos ambientes

universitarios, dada la posibilidad de alcanzar de forma rápida y fácil los compromisos académicos. Esta relación social que se establece entre editoriales depredadoras e investigadores se identifica como la corrupción académica: se pierde la científicidad en los trabajos.

Los resultados de la investigación de Castro-Martínez *et al.* (2019) demuestran que las prácticas depredadoras son evidentes manifestaciones de corrupción a nivel transnacional, en el contexto académico. El estudio científico demostró que el 83,61% de los profesionales encuestados desconoce sobre la existencia de editoriales depredadoras y el 7,81% alega haber publicado textos en la Editorial Académica Española (EAE), reconocida como una editorial depredadora, con presencia en nuestra área geográfica.

Estas ideas se corresponden con los criterios de Arrellano-Gault (2018) sobre la corrupción vista como un proceso social que implica que las personas terminan constituyendo una densa red de transacciones, con vínculos estables que se reproducen y pueden considerarse, según la perspectiva, como impropios o ilegales, pero también como actos relativamente normales o comunes. De esta forma sería acertado considerar la corrupción como la “relación social con arreglo a intereses particulares que se estructura desde la institucionalidad del entramado organizacional y deviene en procesos antisistémicos que afectan deberes de función, intereses colectivos y/o la moral social” (Fabre *et al.*, 2018, p. 45).

Ante esta problemática académica es preciso alertar a los profesionales de las ciencias sobre la incidencia de manifestaciones asociadas a la corrupción en editoriales y revistas depredadoras, específicamente en la EAE, ya que contar con publicaciones espurias tiene consecuencias para los autores como el desprestigio, la pérdida de la autoría legal y el plagio científico, entre otras.

Sobre la editorial depredadora: EAE, refieren Jiménez-Contreras y Jiménez-Segura (2016) que los mensajes recibidos en el último año por miles de investigadores de diversos países se relacionan con la casa editorial alemana fundada en 2002. Sin embargo, en realidad, se trata de la Editorial Académica Española (<http://www.eae-publishing.com>). La empresa no hace ningún trabajo científico; ni revisión crítica ni examen técnico ni trabajo alguno de edición; la misma ni es en rigor una editorial ni es en definitiva española ni mucho menos,

académica. No puede calificarse así a un equipo de mercaderes que no siente el menor respeto por la ciencia ni por la academia, a la cual visualizan como una mera oportunidad de negocio. Ese equipo se comporta de manera opaca y prescinde de legitimidad científica.

En este sentido, de Giusti (2014) plantea que la EAE es una editorial que forma parte del grupo alemán VDM Publishing. Su trabajo se basa en el rastillaje de obras científicas, especialmente de tesis y de correos electrónicos de autores para enviarles propuestas de publicación. En estos se invita enfática y reiteradamente a los autores a realizar una publicación con su firma, con la ventaja de no contar con un cargo inicial. Además, ofrecen la creación gratuita de las tapas y la obtención del ISBN, a la vez que prometen regalías por ventas que dudosamente llegarán al autor. Sus prácticas no dejan de ser legales dado que publican contenidos con autorización de los autores; sin embargo, se encuentran en la red numerosos artículos criticando dicha modalidad de trabajo, que evidencia un lucro que va en desprestigio del autor.

En este sentido es necesario analizar las manifestaciones de corrupción académica más allá de las consideraciones legalistas, ya que la EAE como empresa actúa desde lo presuntamente legal y los autores que ahí publican obtienen el ISBN reglamentario. Esto afecta a la académica porque tales publicaciones no aportan ninguno de los servicios esperados de una revista científica como el *peer review* (revisión por pares).

En investigaciones realizadas sobre la EAE, se constató que según el contrato editorial que se propone, esta se encuentra localizada en Riga, Letonia, Unión Europea. Pero en las ediciones de las publicaciones muestran su localización en la isla Mauricio, perteneciente a las Islas Mascareñas, al sur del continente africano, en el océano Índico.

En este sentido, la localización de la presunta editorial científica evidencia que no es española y que utilizan este nombre como parte de las tácticas de mercadeo utilizadas en el engaño académico. Además, se demuestra la hipótesis de su localización en los llamados paraísos fiscales, fuera del alcance de los sistemas legales o regulatorios que podrían monitorear o limitar sus operaciones.

Sobre las publicaciones es pertinente conocer que la EAE no se encuentra en buscadores científicos globales como Google Académico ni está indexada en las principales bases de datos científicos. A este tipo de editorial espuria no la representa ninguna institución académica ni científica de renombre internacional, y sus editores no son profesionales reconocidos en el mundo académico ni cuentan con publicaciones científicas legítimas.

Para evitar las prácticas académicas inadecuadas es necesario que los estudiantes, académicos e investigadores desarrollen habilidades para reconocer este u otro tipo de fraudes en la publicación por medio de la circulación de información y la capacitación sobre el tema en los ambientes académicos. Existe una responsabilidad que recae en el autor,



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que implica revisar la idoneidad y el cumplimiento de mínimos estándares por parte de las revistas. Mientras se sigan enviando artículos a este tipo de publicaciones fraudulentas, seguirá existiendo el problema (Bertoglia & Águila, 2018).

Ante estas ideas, es imprescindible citar a Silva Ayçaguer (2016), quien plantea que es recomendable que los autores no publiquen en tales revistas ni citen trabajos que tengan esa procedencia; que los comités editoriales de las revistas exijan a los autores extirpar toda referencia correspondiente a tales publicaciones, y que los tribunales de grados científicos rechacen aquellos que vertebren sus argumentos en torno a artículos allí publicados.

Conclusiones

Alertar y divulgar sobre estas prácticas corruptas entre los académicos e incluir el tema en programas de estudio debe ser el objetivo principal de la preparación profesional para prevenir la corrupción académica que se manifiesta en la relación que se establece entre autores y editoriales espurias. Exigir calidad en las publicaciones científicas permitirá que se limiten las oportunidades de aceptar publicaciones de dudosa reputación por los claustros académicos y, a la vez, que se incrementen los riesgos de sanciones a quienes busquen créditos con publicaciones depredadoras, para de esa manera potenciar un efectivo control institucional y social e impedir que se naturalicen manifestaciones de corrupción en contextos científicos.

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Publishing in Predatory Journals from India:

Making Sense of the Conundrum



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The Dramatic Introduction

When you are an early career psychiatrist, fresh out of the oven of the academic rigours of residency, you feel you have a lot to offer. This eagerness further intensifies when you receive a mail from the editor of a journal asking for your contribution. As a young academician, you will think that here is somebody asking for my opinion, and also providing me with the ease of submitting by mail (and hence circumventing the tedious process of manuscript submission). Same happened with me.

But, at the same, some promises appeared too good to be true. The assurance of early acceptance and free access appeared so lucrative that I decided to jump on the project. It was only later that I looked into the fine print and the steep article processing charges caught my attention. When I discussed this with my colleagues, I realised the offer was no privilege, and it is fair to consider myself a victim. This is how mostly academic fraternity in India is introduced to the business of predatory journals.

Harsh Fact Findings

A little bit of research can explain the modus operandi of such journals. Such journals are usually published from less known or often self-proclaimed newly initiated publishers. The name usually includes the term *international*, and they offer pretty lucrative assurances of timely publications. As widely claimed by researchers, the essential ethics of publications are not followed. The peer review in such journals is a sham, plagiarism checks are obsolete, and there have also been instances where manuscripts have been stolen. Needless to say, most of the research results were a turn off. But there was another side of the coin. Numerous independent researches confirm the fact that India happens to be the major contributor to the business of predatory journals (Priyadarshini, 2017). It was almost like something did not explain this enigma.

The Indian Academia

To understand further the dynamics, we have to comprehend the competitive field of Indian academia. Several indicators govern faculty positions in various universities in India. One of the prerequisite parameters gauged are the publications of the candidate. The University Grants Commission (UGC), which is the highest regulatory authority, has laid down detailed guidelines in these regards. Being a faculty of a medical college entails being under the purview of Medical Council of India (MCI). Initial notifications by both the authorities focus on the publications quantity. It was only in the later notifications that the authorities revised guidelines inserted clauses that focused on the quality of the publications. MCI, in its latest update, has recommended some journals archived in specific indexing databases only as valid publications to consider. In the same vein, UGC has also implemented a system of Academic Performance Indicator (API). According to its latest revision of API, UGC has also drawn up a list of recommended journals to guide the faculty.

The Paradox

It has been a few years that the recommendations are in place. But, the reality is that the results have been far from what was desired. The recent reports do not show any dip in the publications from India in predatory journals. We need to take a closer look into the picture to understand this paradox. Many of the journals recommended by UGC or MCI actually fall into the category of predatory journals. UGC has recently published a revised list of recommended journals. Even in that, there are approximately 71 journal titles that are considered predatory. So basically, the conclusion may be that one may end up publishing in a predatory journal even after abiding every law in the book, thus, defeating the purpose of the whole exercise (Pal & Paul, 2017).

An Author's Viewpoint

A valid question that arises at this stage is that if publishing in a predatory journal is considered detrimental to science as well to one's career, why do not the authors themselves become wary? As much apt as the question may seem, there are many reasons why such journals have been able to sustain their business. The most important reason why these journals flourish is that the whole process seems very easy and time-saving for the author. Prerequisites for manuscript submission and the submission process itself are very author friendly. Since peer review is debatable, the manuscript process time frame is very short. The final outcome is that the authors get manuscripts published in a very short time span. For faculty preparing for interviews regarding promotion, this is priceless. These journals usually rigorously follow the recommendations of MCI and UGC. Thus once published, you get decently formatted manuscript abiding all the rules. For example, the guidelines have stressed that the journals have to have International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), both print-ISSN and electronic-ISSN. Many renowned journals will fail to meet these criteria, but these debated journals will have both the ISSN printed on its title page. The journals perform decent formatting and will have their archives in most indexing databases. Basically, these journals tick all the boxes in the rule book.

Another reason why such journals continue to flourish is they follow an open access policy. The longing to reach

other researchers without any barriers is a major driving factor behind the success of predatory journals. Recent reports also show that predatory journals tend to get decent citations. As a result, authors look for widespread viewership for their works. But, why do not the authors prefer any other open-access journals? The answer to this question lies on the allegations that established publishing firms are much more rigid in their scope. If you are planning to write on something that is controversial or not well accepted in the purview of established science, there is a high chance that you will get rejected. Thus predatory journals provide a platform to gather foothold with less recognised theories.

Steps taken

The crucial step taken is to educate authors. Volumes of literature have been published to educate authors about the jeopardy of publishing in predatory journals. The ethics of publication is also something that has been talked about in great details to all faculties at all stages of their career. In addition, the UGC has created their white list of recommended journals to consider for publications, and it also has mandated that each university should come up with its white list (Priyadarshini, 2018).

UGC, on the other hand, has too encouraged researchers to alert them about any potential culprit they come across. Though this idea is praise-worthy, many feel that this process unnecessarily routes through a faculty member. Also, it is mandatory for the complainant to identify oneself. Such measures are deemed redundant as these measures decrease the chance of someone in the lower rungs of academic hierarchy exposing a guilty party.

There is no doubt that all these efforts are laudable. But, we also need to reflect on the limitations of these steps. The idea of a white list seems utopian. Experts have already speculated that it is impossible to identify all journals in a particular field, leave aside classifying them.

My Comments

As an early career researcher and clinician, I believe that there is a need to decouple research from academic performance. Research should be encouraged but not putting academic progress at stake; it should be a



matter of choice and, unless that is the case, faculty will always try to choose the shortcut to success. Moreover, the process of judging by quantity should also be replaced. The future guidelines should also place importance on the quality of the publication. How to judge the quality will again be a matter of controversy, but I think that is something worth exploring.

Publishing in predatory journals is usually not something done out of choice. It is often a result of despair or mistake on the part of an author. But, we cannot ignore the fact that a huge amount of effort and research grants is going down the drain when it gets published in these debatable journals. Predatory journals tick all the right boxes of a guideline but miss the most basic one: the ethics of research. Thus, unless we address the deeper issues, this menace is going to continue.

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Insight into Plagiarism:

Pseudo Research or Art of Stealing?



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Publications in reputed indexed journals have always been a matter for pride and the main aim of scientific research. Planning and conducting with one's concepts and ideas and reporting to the scientific community worldwide are essential for the advance of biomedical science [Gasparyan, *et al.*, 2017]. This event not only helps the researcher to be recognized in the scientific community but also helps in the advancement of his/her carrier. The developments in digitalization and accessibility of any content through the Internet give opportunities to plagiarist to copy-paste any material and to any extent [Logue, 2004].

Plagiarism is considered as an act of copy and pasting or altering someone else's writing or words without ac-

knowledging them. This act of selfishness makes the genuine researcher devoid of the credit he deserves. The word plagiarism derives from the Latin word *Plagium* which means *kidnapping* (Shin, 2019). In today's world plagiarists can be seen involved in the copy-pasting of titles, concepts, ideas, theories and even in extreme cases copy-pasting of data, tabulation charts, graphs, diagrams, and images from others work or Internet without properly attributing them. Such plagiarists have a hidden agenda: Who cares? Who is watching? (Khadilkar, 2018).

On the basis of intention to plagiarize, there are to ways to classify plagiarism: as intentional or unintentional (Das, 2018). The basis of the extent of it allows for another categorization: direct or mosaic. Those categories show that plagiarists go to any extent to make doing



the job easy (Kumar, Priya, Musalaiah & Nagasree, 2014). The most common types of plagiarism seen in biomedical publications are inaccurate citation plagiarism, self-plagiarism, *verbatim* plagiarism, cyber or image plagiarism, and paraphrasing and replication (Dhammi & Haq, 2016).

Although most reputed journals strictly adhere to zero tolerance politics against plagiarism, plagiarists invent newer techniques each day to plagiarize. Now a genuine question arises: Can plagiarism be avoided? The answer is Yes. Some authors believe that educating and training the individuals involved in research activities and medical writing can help create awareness on maintaining research integrity and consequences when being caught in the act. Software like Plagiarism checker X, iThenticate, Turnitin, Plagium, eTBlast, and Citeplag can not only be used by the journals' editors for earlier detection of plagiarism of manuscripts but also by authors and young researchers for self-evaluation of the texts before submission to any reputed journal, which will create awareness and a sense of ethics and morality in the upcoming researchers. Last but not the least, strict laws against plagiarism should be enforced to impose penalties, punishment, temporary debarment, and even retraction of the published article. The author of this text hopes that everyone will work to curb the practice of plagiarism and that genuine and high-quality researches take biomedical science to new heights.

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Academic Publishing in India:

Issues and Tribulations



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The universities take up the publication of the academic works produced by their scholars, in most parts of the world. The higher the status of the university, the more prestige accrues to its publications; for example, Oxford University Press and Harvard University Press have very high status. However, many universities, like the University of Kentucky, in the USA, make it mandatory for the proceedings of any conference held on its premises to be published at the university press. No university press, especially the very well-known ones like Cambridge, Oxford, and Chicago, limit publication to their own scholars. Some university presses like Oxford University Press, have opened their offices in other parts of the world, to absorb the local scholarship.

For a long time, India was a British colony, and its education, particularly formal western education, was altogether initiated, programmed, and controlled by Britain. As a consequence, higher education in India was, and still is, conducted in the English language. This has led to most scholarly publishing in India to be done in English unless it is literature in a regional language. India's total commitment to English in academics can be understood in the context of English being the only link language that is acceptable to all Indians. Firstly, it is a global language, and, secondly it does not connect to the internal language politics that exist in India. The Indian sub-continent has twenty major official languages that are spoken by the majority of mainstream Indians. But India had a past of speaking and having languages such as Farsi (Iran) and Urdu (now spoken in Pakistan) as well as a plethora of local dialects that belong to the minority and ethnically marginal people. Till the Independence of the country in 1947 from British rule, Urdu was an essential language in North India to be replaced by Hindi, when Urdu supposedly migrated to Pakistan.

Nonetheless, even as of today, seventy years later, from the acceptance of Hindi as the national language, it is not acceptable to many Indians, especially from the South, who speak languages belonging to the Dravidian group.

With this background if we come to academic publishing in India, it is obvious that English is the principal language of publication at the university level. But unlike the United Kingdom, where universities play an essential role in publication, Indian universities have never taken up publication seriously. Because of the colonial legacy, Indian scholars gained prestige by publishing, in the British and now American university presses. Most social science scholars either publish with British university presses like Oxford University that has its branches in major Indian cities like Calcutta, Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai and Delhi, or with other prestigious ones like Princeton and Harvard. English language publishers from outside of India, like Sage publications, have made India their home and publish locally from there. At this time, Sage owns most of the

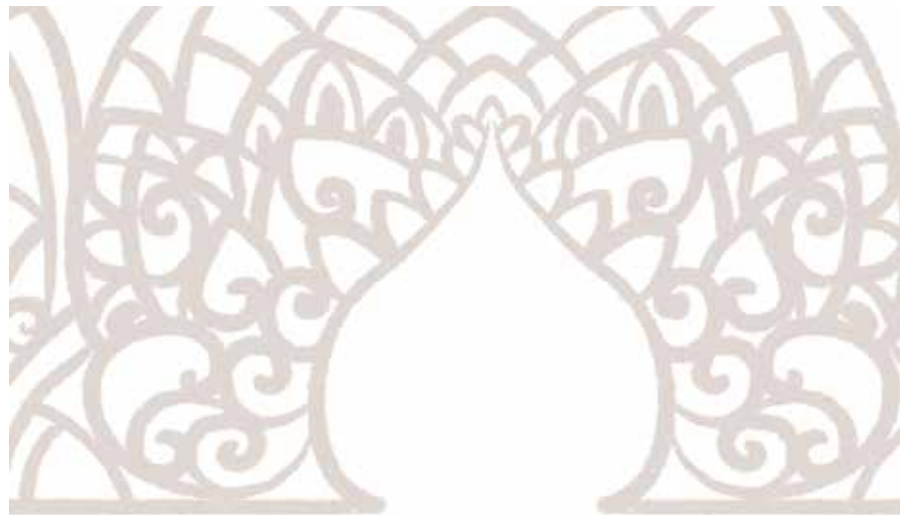


social science journals in India, including those that have traditionally been published by old established institutions like the Anthropological Survey of India. Maybe, because of the presence and dominance of big and established publication houses like Springer and Penguin; university publishing in India, never had a chance to develop.

I have been associated with Delhi University, for more than forty years and have seen that the university press has only been used as a printing press, to print question papers, university reports and stationery and their most important work had been to print the degrees and certificates issued by the university. For a short period in the sixties, there was some printing of text-books written by university professors; but this fell into disuse as most scholars preferred to publish from more prestigious and what appeared to them, internationally recognized sources. There was a proliferation of local publishing houses, as well and many not very successful scholars would get their works published from locally operating houses.

The publishing scene underwent a major face change when the University Grants Commission (UGC) made it mandatory for scholars to have a number of publications for various stages of their advancement in the academic field. Firstly, a scholar who aspires for a Ph. D. degree is required to have at least two publications, a person applying for an assistant professor has to have at least three, associate professor, five and a full professor, at least ten.

The point to be pondered is how publications get legitimized. It is evident that any or sundry publications cannot qualify. But the way in which UGC has set its standards leaves one perplex. They have given the highest priority to publications in journals. Book chapters, no matter how prestigious, are entirely left out of reckoning, as are contributions to encyclopaedias and anthologies. The list of journals released by them also raises eyebrows, as most of them are paid journals and not of institutions and associations; not even the ones published by eminent publishing houses like Sage. There are no university published journals. If we take say in the case of anthropology, there are journals published for decades by the anthropological associations and institutions that have been ignored by





the UGC. Since it is the main funding body that also makes all the rules for appointment into government run institutions, its rules are binding on the majority of India academics. The insidious push by UGC towards paid publishing indicates the direction which the state wishes to take the academic world.

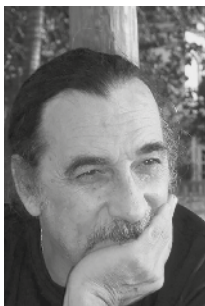
In the house, university publishing has never been encouraged in India, and it plays practically no role in the establishment of academic credentials. Earlier, the prestigious university publishers from outside, as well as the private ones, had good control over the market. At present, a large number of dubious online publishers have created a grey area of publishing, and surprisingly, some of these private and commercial journals have been recognised by the UGC; leaving out many of the academically prestigious and non-paying journals out of the loop.

The concerted efforts of the states to corporatize education reflect in the way certain publications are being encouraged by the state-run institutions, especially the ones that make the policies of employment and promotion. Paid journals do not care about standards as much as they care for the money that they get. Online publishing has created a big market and commercialized publication. The universities in India could have stepped in, but they have shown no interest in doing so. Many students and even lower level professionals find it difficult to pay the steep price asked by some of these journals. With the mandatory requirements of publications and the restrictions put on publications that will be recognized, the academic community, as well as the standards of excellence, have been compromised.



ALARMA

en las publicaciones médicas: editoriales, revistas y congresos depredadores



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En 2005, el profesor de la Universidad de Stanford, John Ioannidis, publicó un inquietante artículo que sobresaltó tanto a editores científicos como a investigadores en materia de salud al demostrar que la mayoría de los hallazgos que se publicaban arribaban a conclusiones incorrectas.

Algunas de las razones de diversa naturaleza que pueden explicar tan sombrío panorama se desarrollan en Silva (2018a). Aquí nos interesa, sin embargo, detenernos en una de ellas, aunque quizás no sea la que más gravita en esta realidad (Shen & Björk, 2015): la irrupción de las llamadas revistas y editoriales depredadoras (RED) como parcialmente responsables de los falsos progresos científicos.

El fenómeno que nos ocupará se inscribe dentro de un promisorio modelo alternativo de comunicación científica surgido a comienzos de siglo, cuyo propósito es que el contenido de las revistas científicas sea de li-

bre acceso. El principio subyacente a tal iniciativa —“el llamado” *open access* (OA)— consiste en que los conocimientos científicos publicados no deberían ser manejados como mercancías, sino como resultados a los cuales toda la sociedad debería poder acceder y diseminar sin barreras técnicas ni obstáculos económicos.

Sin embargo, el modelo mediante el cual se pretendía neutralizar la codicia de las grandes editoriales tomó vida propia en el marco de la lógica mercantil (Silva, 2016a). A la vez que se conseguía que tanto un académico como un ama de casa pudiera acceder a la información sin limitaciones, se fue consolidando el traslado de los llamados “costos operativos del procesamiento de un artículo” (los denominados *article processing charges*) a quienes pretendan publicar en las revistas de la órbita del OA. Actualmente, para un creciente porcentaje de revistas de este tipo, los autores deben pagar montos que oscilan entre 500 y 5000 dólares por un solo artículo, lo cual ha terminado por enturbiar la altruista iniciativa original. En un libro que examina los límites morales que deberían regir en el mercado, Sandel (2019) advierte que cuanto más extienden los mercados su alcance a dominios no económicos de la vida, tanto más se embrollan en cuestiones morales. El diccionario de la Academia de la Lengua Española, en una de sus acepciones, define el término “cáncer” como la “proliferación en el seno de un grupo social de situaciones o hechos destructivos”.

Desafortunadamente, la difusión del conocimiento en ciencias biomédicas padece de este mal.

Es en ese marco que irrumpen las RED: un modelo lucrativo fraudulento, caracterizado por rasgos tales como prometer una rápida publicación de los artículos, ofrecer tentadores precios una vez acogido un artículo, comprometerse a una exigente revisión por pares, que en realidad no se produce o es en extremo débil, atribuirse falsos factores de impacto e incluir académicos inexistentes en sus consejos editoriales (Silva, 2016b).

El más connotado enemigo de esta plaga académica, Jeffrey Beall, prefirió en el año 2017 dejar de publicar su célebre lista, aparentemente a raíz del acoso del que fue objeto, según reseña Straumsheim (2017). Pero un grupo de activistas anónimos ha perseverado con esa meritoria labor a través de un sitio (<https://predatoryjournals.com/journals/>) que mantiene actualizada la enumeración de revistas y editoriales que componen la funesta nómina. Estos lúgubres instrumentos siguen dejando réditos a sus inescrupulosos creadores. En efecto, el número de tales revistas no ha dejado de crecer luego de su irrupción en 2011 (figura 1).

Un nuevo derrotero de esta deriva ha sido denunciado recientemente en revistas de gran prestigio (Grey, 2016). Se trata de invitaciones para acudir como participante y hasta como presidente de una mesa redonda o sesión de trabajo, a conferencias o congresos que son genuinos fraudes pues las contribuciones no son objeto de revisión alguna. Suelen realizarse en lugares turísticamente atractivos; quien cae cándidamente en la tentación de aceptar, tiene que desembolsar montos que se ubican entre 600 y 2000 euros, según ha denunciado Brean (2017), un destacado investigador noruego. Por más señas, Brean consiguió que se admitiera sin demora para su presentación una contribución donde se daba cuenta de ¡25 osos polares que se habían convertido de manera espontánea en personas! (Silva, 2018b).

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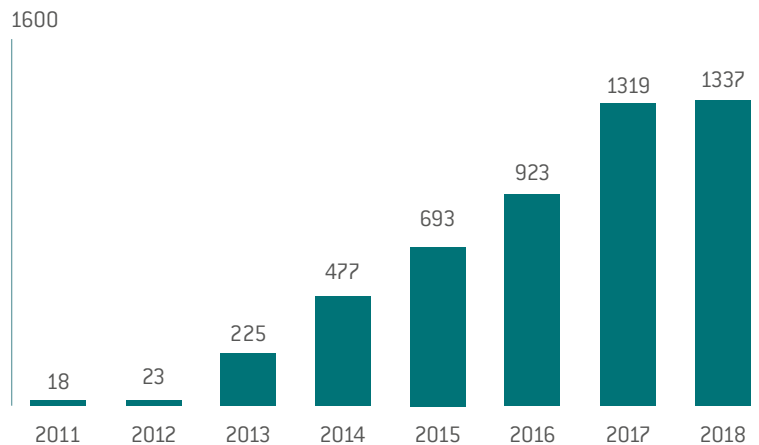


Figura 1. Número de revistas depredadoras aparecidas entre 2011 y 2018

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