

Money for nothing: predatory practices in academic journals and conferences

GUIRR Webinar, June 16, 2021

The InterAcademy Partnership (IAP)

A global partnership of over 140 national and regional merit-based academies of science, engineering and medicine

Strategic Priorities

- ❑ **Build the capacity of, and empower,** regional networks of academies and their national members;
- ❑ **Provide independent, authoritative advice** on global, regional and national issues;
- ❑ **Communicate** the importance of science, engineering and medicine in terms of research, education, literacy, public discourse, and outreach



Project

2020

Combating Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences

OVERVIEW

PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS

GORDON AND BETTY
MOORE
FOUNDATION

National academies plan assault on predatory journals

By Robin Bisson

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Research Europe | 30 July 2020

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World

Academies to target predatory journals

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

Robin Bisson

An international project to determine the scale of predatory publishing practices is looking to harness the authority of national academies to turn the tide on profit-driven, bad-faith journals taking advantage of researchers.

Predatory journals offer rapid publication of research papers but often lack robust peer review, and their main aim is to collect fees from researchers. There is also an increasing trend for predatory conferences that present like standard scientific meetings but lack quality control over presentations and charge extortionate attendance fees.

"A lot of people either don't know this is an issue or think it's just an issue for the developing world," said Teresa Stoepler, executive director of policy at the InterAcademy Partnership. The global network counts more than 140 sciences, engineering and medical academies among its members, including the European Academies Science Advisory Council, the National

Academy of Sciences in the United States, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the African Academy of Sciences.

"We really don't know the extent of the problem globally, but it seems to be widespread and has potential to damage individual careers and reverberate throughout the research enterprise," said Stoepler.

Many previous initiatives to combat predatory journals have focused on creating blacklists or whitelists, including the widely used but now defunct list by American librarian Jeffrey Beall.

"Very quickly your working group decided that it didn't want to create another blacklist—they are already numerous and difficult to maintain," said Tracey Elliott, project director at the InterAcademy Partnership, following the first meeting of the working group in late June.

Instead, the InterAcademy project will survey researchers around the world at different stages of their careers, and look at scaling up and adapting interventions, such as training programmes on good practice for early career researchers, to combat predatory practices.

By the end of 2021, the team behind it hopes to produce recommendations for research institutions, policymakers, publishers and funders. Elliott said funders in particular are a key lever in combatting predatory practices. "In some cases they are funding poor quality research which is wasteful at best," she said.

Stoepler said unethical practices have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, with even legitimate, non-predatory publishers being overwhelmed by the volume of submissions.

In June two medical journals, the Lancet and the New England Journal of Medicine, retracted papers, including one that had halted international trials of the experimental Covid-19 drug hydroxychloroquine, due to questions over the data underlying them.

"Some of the information that's getting out there to policymakers on Covid-19 is alarming," said Elliott. "Whether the articles are retracted or not, they are still there in the public domain."

Another study will look at research evaluation practices and how they may exacerbate the growth of predatory journals and conferences emphasising publication at all costs.

"We are challenging a well-established system, and in addressing research evaluation we would be challenging it even more," said Elliott.



"Some of the information getting out there to policymakers on Covid-19 is alarming."

Tracey Elliott, project director at the InterAcademy Partnership

"Combating predatory academic journals and conferences"

Study objectives

- ☐ Define predatory and unethical practices in academic journals and conferences
- ☐ Gauge their extent and impact
- ☐ Understand their root causes
- ☐ Examine efforts to-date to combat predatory journals, publishers and conferences around the world
- ☐ Provide concrete recommendations for addressing the problem



Working Group



"Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences"

COMMENT • 11 DECEMBER 2019

Predatory journals: no definition, no defence

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



Predatory conferences 'now outnumber official scholarly events'

UK researcher who travelled to predatory conference in Denmark calls for greater awareness of problem



ScienceDirect

Guest Editorial

An Alert to COVID-19 Literature in Predatory Publishing Venues

[Jaime A. Teixeira da Silva](#)



WORLD VIEW A personal take on events



Illegitimate journals scam even senior scientists

Kelly Cobey has seen a litany of researchers preyed on by predatory journals

NATURE | COMMENT

Stop this waste of people, animals and money

06 September 2017

Predatory journals have shoddy reporting and include papers from wealthy nations, find David Moher, Larissa Shamseer, Kelly Cobey and colleagues.

nature

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NEWS • 08 FEBRUARY 2021

Hundreds of 'predatory' journals indexed on leading scholarly database

Scopus has stopped adding content from most of the flagged titles, but the analysis highlights how poor-quality science is infiltrating literature.

Stakeholder dialogues

- To hear sectoral perspectives (insights, motivations etc)
- To explore practicable and effective recommendations for each sector
- To pave way for dissemination and uptake of recommendations (co-design, co-ownership)



Opportunity
Fri, 30 October 2020

Calling all researchers to participate in a landmark survey on academic predatory journals and conferences



Deadline
Nov 30

Policy for Science

iap SCIENCE
HEALTH
POLICY
the interacademy partnership

CALLING ALL RESEARCHERS

HELP COMBAT PREDATORY ACADEMIC JOURNALS & CONFERENCES

PLEASE TAKE THE SURVEY

DEADLINE
30 Nov 2020

Predatory Reports

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

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Main research questions

What...

- are the typical signs of predatory practices?
- challenges and barriers to addressing them?
- professional and personal impacts of using them?
- consequences of predatory practices?

How....

- prevalent are predatory journals and conferences?
- do researchers use predatory journals and conferences?
- have they been combatted to-date?
- might they be combatted in future? how can we raise professional awareness?

Why....

- do researchers use predatory journals and conferences?
- does predatory publishing continue to grow?
- might a global consensus be needed?

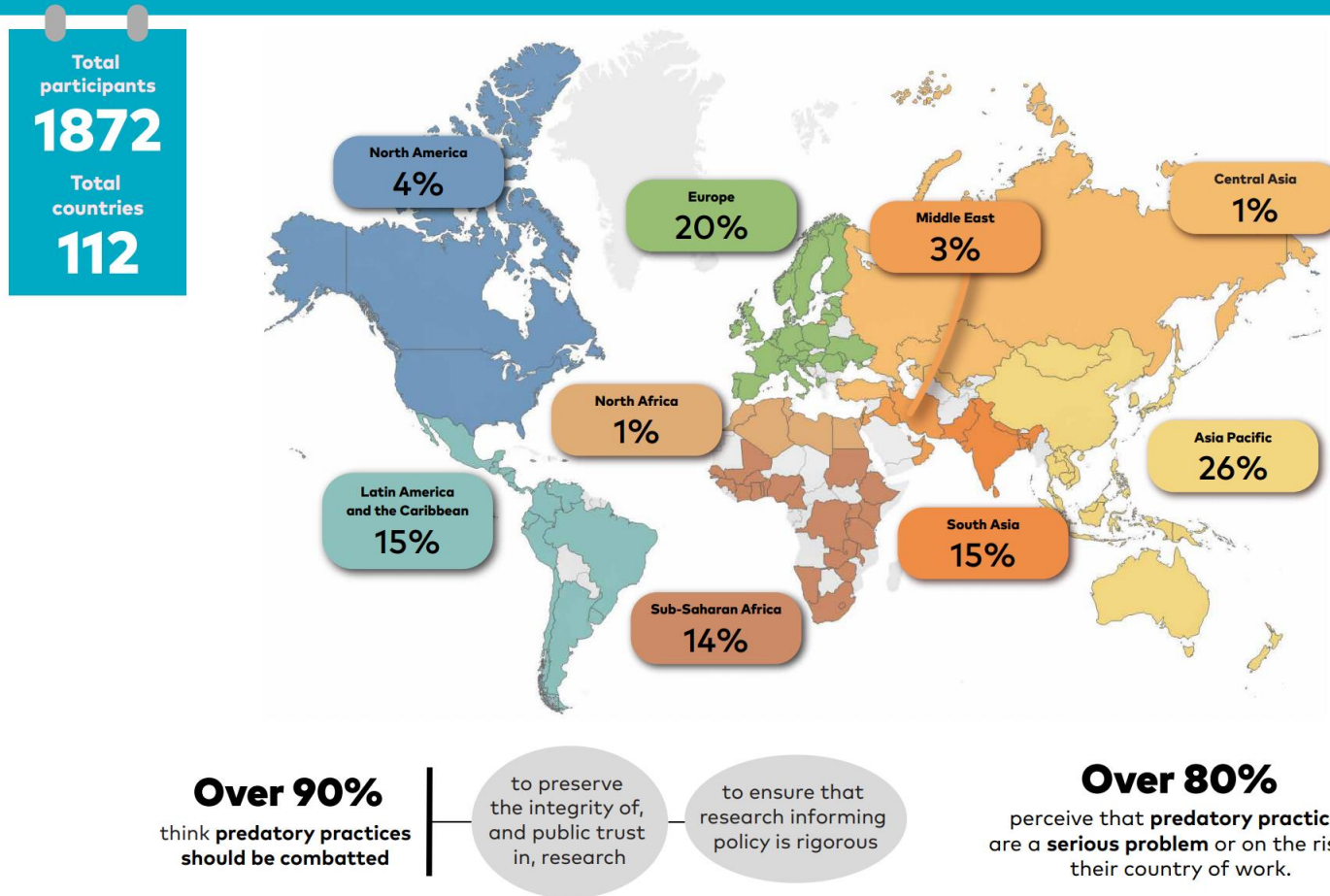
Landmark survey on predatory academic practices

Results from a survey on predatory academic practices

The purpose of the survey was twofold:

- to inform the project so that it can recommend more effective ways to combat predatory practices and protect researchers everywhere, and
- to raise awareness of these practices amongst the global research community.

Over 1800 researchers from diverse disciplines, academic stages, and countries gave their perspective on predatory academic journals and conferences...



"Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences"

Landmark survey on predatory academic practices

At least 25% of respondents have either published in a predatory journal, participated in a predatory conference, or don't know if they have.

They were not aware at the time

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

They needed to advance their career

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

It was a faster, easier, or cheaper option

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

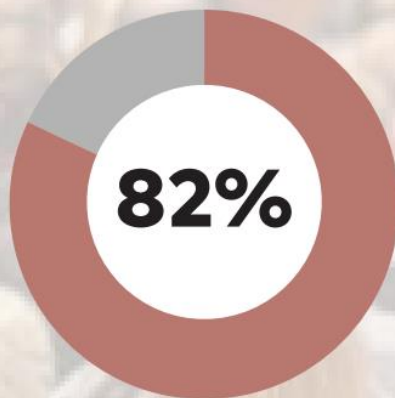
They were encouraged by their peers

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

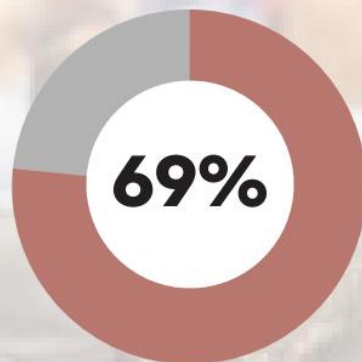
Landmark survey on predatory academic practices

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

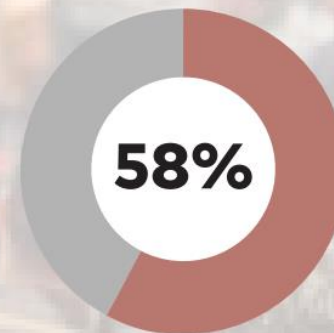
**Fuel misinformation
in public policy**



**Infiltrate and
undermine the
research enterprise**



**Widen the research
gap between high
income and low
income countries**



Resources already available

A beginner's guide to avoiding 'predatory' journals



Identificación y tratamiento
de revistas espurias



International Congress and Convention Association

Members Benefits Knowledge News Events About



Predatory Conferences

Tips on How to Identify and Avoid Predatory Conferences

<https://predatoryjournals.com/publishers/>

Stop Predatory Journals

Predatory Reports

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

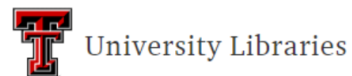
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The rise of predatory publishers

Fighting back against a growing trend that threatens to undermine scholarly communication

<https://guides.library.ttu.edu/c.php?g=543301>



TTU Libraries / Guides / Predatory Publishing / Home

Predatory Publishing: Home

What it is and what you can do to protect your academic reputation



Choose the right journal or publisher for your research



Preliminary conclusions (work-in-progress)

- ❑ Predatory journals and conferences are **on the rise** and are becoming **increasingly sophisticated**.
- ❑ Publishers, indexing services, librarians and others are spending increasing amounts of **time and money trying to tackle predatory practices**.
- ❑ They are **permeating many geographies, disciplines and career stages**: no-one can afford to be complacent.
- ❑ (Post) **pandemic working practices** may further exacerbate predatory practices.
- ❑ Distinguishing between predatory, poor quality and unethical publishing practices is difficult – a **spectrum approach** is more appropriate.
- ❑ **Raising awareness and understanding** of predatory practices appears to be the most critical intervention needed to prevent researchers falling prey to them
- ❑ **Commercial interests of the publishing industry** are perceived to be the most difficult to contend with by researchers.

Preliminary conclusions (work-in-progress)

- ❑ **To eliminate root causes**, we need to go further and work together globally to
 - ❑ revise conditions for **recruitment and career progression in academia**
 - ❑ strengthen academic ownership of the **future direction of academic publishing**
 - ❑ promote **alternative economic models of (open access) publishing**
 - ❑ make **transparent peer review** the norm – so that sloppy or non-existent peer review is difficult
 - ❑ reinvigoration of **good practice in training, mentoring and supervision**

The recent **ISC report** on the **Future of Scientific Publishing** addresses some of these:

<https://council.science/publications/sci-pub-report1/>

Government-University-Industry: emerging ideas for action

Government

- **Governments** could **promote research standards** by:
 - Recognizing and supporting **journals with a proven track record** (through their funding programs),
 - Promoting and disseminating **ethical standards and good practices** in scientific research and publishing.

University

- **Universities** could address **research evaluation/assessment** by:
 - Implementing **transparent evaluation and assessment** based on the quality of work rather than the quantity (Governments can help too)
 - Incentivizing students, staff and researchers to promote the **awareness of predatory practices** in academia while also supporting their **continuous professional development** in research ethics and integrity

Industry

- **Industries** could address the **monetization of research** by:
 - Incentivizing publishing standards in the market which **uphold quality research and expose predatory practices**
 - **Supporting the research enterprise** and its contribution to informing policy through investment in efforts which strengthen research capacity and development, which is **rigorous, ethical and relevant**.

You can follow the project at
www.interacademies.org/project/predatorypublishing

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