

Red Flags: Know the Signs of Predatory Publishers

There are several "red flags" to be cautious about when it comes to finding a journal in which to publish your article. Below are some common signs of predatory publisher behavior:

- **E-mailed Invitations to Submit an Article:**
 - Was the e-mail well written?
 - Were there typos or misspelled words?
 - Was the language awkward or unprofessional?
 - Did the e-mail use flattery to convince you to submit your article or join their editorial board?
 - Example: "your contribution towards the research is *absolutely prominent*" or "Dear *Esteemed Scholar*"
 - Did the e-mail come from a generic contact address (gmail, yahoo, etc.)?
- **Journal's Name Suspiciously Similar to a Prominent Journal in the Field:**
 - Is the title trying to make you believe it is a journal or publisher with which you are already familiar?
 - Many predatory publishers create journal titles (and even publisher company names) that are intentionally similar to well respected journals or publishers.
- **Misleading Geographic Information in the Title:**
 - A title might suggest that the journal is based in the United States or the United Kingdom, but in reality, the publisher might actually be based in India or China.
- **Outdated Website Appearance:**
 - Is the journal website easy to find?
 - Does the website have an outdated appearance?
 - Are there typos, spelling and/or grammatical errors?
 - Are images distorted or fuzzy? Are images authorized to appear on the website?
 - Does the website include "About" information? If so, is the information provided sufficient?
 - Is the journal sponsored or produced by a well-known, and well-respected organization, association, or academic institution?
 - Does the journal/publisher claim to be a "leading publisher" or use boastful language regarding their reputation? Some predatory publishers make boastful claims about their reputation, even if they are a startup or a new publisher.
- **Broad Aim & Scope:**
 - Does the aim and scope seem appropriate for the journal?

- Predatory journals often have an extremely broad scope in order to attract a large number of article submissions.
- **Insufficient Contact Information:**
 - Is full contact information including a physical address, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses provided? Be wary of journals that only provide a web contact form.
- **Lack of Editors or Editorial Board:**
 - Does the journal list the members of its editorial board on their website?
 - Predatory journals include the names of leading scholars in a field among their editorial boards without their knowledge or consent.
 - Contact journal editors and board members and ask about their experience with the journals. Editorial board members of legitimate journals welcome questions from potential authors.
- **Editors with No or False Academic Credentials:**
 - Are these people recognized experts in the field with full credentials?
 - Feel free to contact editors and ask about their experience with the journal.
- **Unclear Author Fee Structures:**
 - Are author fees clearly explained? How much are author fees, article processing charges, and other associated publication costs?
 - Do the author fees seem comparable to other reputable open access journals?
 - Is it clear when fees are due?
- **Bogus Impact Factors:**
 - Does the journal claim to have an impact factor?
 - Check to see if the impact factor is correct using Web of Science's [Incites Journal Citation Reports](#).
- **Invented Metrics:**
 - What type of metrics does the journal use? Can these be verified?
 - Do other reputable journals use the same metrics? Many predatory publishers use fake or invented metrics to fool you into believing they are a credible journal.
 - Does the journal promote the questionable Index Copernicus Value?
- **False Index Claims:**
 - Where is the journal indexed? Can this be verified? Contact library.reference@noaa.gov for help on this topic.
- **Peer Review Process:**
 - What is the journal's peer review process? Is this process clearly explained on the journal's website? Can you verify that this process is actually followed?
 - Does the journal promise a quick peer-review?
 - Be wary of promises of a speedy peer-review process. Proper peer-review is a time consuming process. Promises of a speedy peer-review process in an indication that either no peer-review is taking place, or the peer-review that is happening is of low quality.

- Many predatory journals claim to have a rigorous peer review process when no peer review actually exists.
- **"Instructions for Authors" Information is Unavailable:**
 - Are there clear instructions for authors regarding how to submit a manuscript?
 - Is there information about how manuscripts are handled once submitted?
- **Manuscripts Submitted via E-mail:**
 - Legitimate publishers typically require manuscripts submissions via a journal-specific or third party submission system.
 - A majority of predatory publishers require manuscript submission via e-mail.
- **Evaluate Published Articles:**
 - Are published articles available? Some predatory publishers don't have any "published" articles available on their website.
 - Have numerous articles been published by the same author(s)?
 - Do article titles and abstracts seem appropriate for the journal? Do these articles seem well researched? Are articles based on sound science?
 - Do you recognize articles that you have seen in reputable journals?
 - Predatory publishers sometimes re-publish (plagiarize) papers that have already been published in other journals without providing credit, claiming the publication as their own.
 - Are published articles written by academics and experts?
 - Predatory publishers publish papers that are not written by academics, or that are pseudo-science.
 - Feel free to contact past authors and ask about their experiences with the journal.
- **Publisher has a Negative Reputation:**
 - Have you found documented examples that the journal or publisher has a negative reputation?
- **Digital Preservation Information is Lacking or Inadequate:**
 - Does the publisher provide information on how journal material is preserved, such as Portico, LOCKSS, etc.?
- **No Retraction Policy**
- **Copyright Information is Lacking**
- **No ISSN**
- **Use Common Sense:**
 - If things just don't seem to be right, trust your instincts and stay away.