



Dealing with predatory publishers/publishing: Answers to some of the most common questions

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Introduction

This Question and Answer (Q&A) document is meant to guide on important aspects of predatory publishers/publishing, such as what an author can do after submitting an article to a predatory journal, what the consequences could be, and so forth.

We collected some of the most common questions researchers have about predatory journals, and the answers were gathered from different online sources. As the topic is constantly evolving, we will keep the document updated.

— What should I do if I submitted an article to a predatory journal?

1. Authors should always check the journal **before submitting** an article and make sure that it is not predatory ([Guidelines for dealing with predatory publishers/publishing: A working document, 2022](#)). Authors are advised to aim for journals indexed in legitimate and reputable databases. This not only ensures that their published work will be preserved but also improves its visibility and dissemination.
2. If authors have **submitted** their work to a suspicious journal, they should not pay the publication charges, sign publishing agreements, or accept any publishing terms and conditions for the publication without first confirming the legitimacy of the journal. The journal may claim that its office is in the United States or the United Kingdom while providing a bank account number in a South Asian country. Therefore, authors should be careful before paying anything to the journal.
3. If a submitted paper has been **accepted** by a predatory journal, the authors should never sign a copyright agreement with the journal or publisher. In some cases, writing to the journal to withdraw the submitted or accepted manuscript before its publication may also be successful.
4. If the paper is **published** online by a predatory journal even after the three measures listed above have been taken, the authors may write to the office of the predatory journal and ask them to withdraw the paper from their website. Although the authors are not guaranteed to receive a response from a predatory journal, their paper might be taken down from the website. This advice is supported by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and has proven successful (see the [COPE Discussion Document](#)). The predatory journal, in some cases, may ask the authors to pay a withdrawal or retraction fee, but the authors should resist this and continue to insist that the journal retract their article.
5. Authors **should never** support predatory publishing. We must collectively say “no” to predatory journals and publishers. This “no” applies to publishing with them and citing their work.

... [further reading](#)

— How can I withdraw a published paper from a predatory journal?

Send an email to the journal immediately, asking them to stop the publication of your article. Send another follow-up email requesting its withdrawal. If you have not paid the article processing charges demanded by the journal yet, **do not** make any payments.

You can expect either of the following responses from the journal:

1. The journal **may not respond** at all to your request. In this case, you must wait for a day or two and then write a final email to the journal editor asking them to confirm the withdrawal within a specific date (e.g., in about a week). If the journal still hasn't responded, you can send a final email saying that since all your efforts to contact the journal have failed, you will consider your paper "unsubmitted".
2. Another typical behavior of predatory journals is to ask for a **very high** withdrawal **fee**. If that is the case, you can argue that this was not mentioned on the journal website, hence you will not pay. After this, send them the final withdrawal email, as mentioned in the previous point.

Contact your **legal office** for further support.

As a safe step, you can consider submitting your manuscript to a preprint repository. This way, you will at least be able to refer to the preprint of your research, if not add the publication to your Curriculum Vitae (CV). It is important that no publishing agreements nor publishing terms have been accepted, or if an agreement has been signed, that you are entitled to republish.

... [further reading](#)

— Can I submit in a new journal after submission in a predatory journal?

Here are some basic orientations:

1. If you are **confident** that the given journal is predatory, you can certainly retract the publication. Predatory journals are designed to maximize income and minimize expenditure. Accordingly, these journals are certainly not interested in a lawsuit (especially an international lawsuit). Emails are a matter of empty threats in that case.

If your paper is already **published**, you most likely have transferred either the paper's copyright or a very wide license to the original journal. You can probably force the predatory journal to retract the paper, but if you want the copyright, you will have to ask for it back, and it is legally up to them whether they want to give it back or not.

Most journals have a policy of only accepting works that have not already been published. Therefore, even if you have retracted your work from a predatory journal after it is published, it is up to the editors of the second journal to make an exception to the rules and publish your paper. It is best to contact the editors of the second journal and explain the situation before submitting your work for consideration.

2. If you are **uncertain** about the degree of 'predatory-ness', simply retract the publication based on the most relevant limitation/ flaw of your study. State explicitly that you feel that the quality of work does not fit their criteria of "high-quality, peer-reviewed science" (quote whatever they described on the webpage). Force them to either agree with the retraction at no cost or to openly have to admit dishonesty regarding their "high-quality" peer-review process.
3. If it is just a **low-quality** but not predatory journal, be fair and go along with the submission this time and stay away from the journal in the future.

... [further reading](#)

— Why should I care about not publishing in a predatory journal?

Here are four reasons why you shouldn't publish in predatory journals:

1. **Damaging the integrity of the scientific archive:** If papers that have not been adequately peer-reviewed are allowed to get into the scientific archive, then it damages the archive in several ways, including:
 - The results that are being claimed may not be correct.
 - The reported results may not be reproducible.
 - The findings in the paper may simply be a work of fiction.
 - Others may rely on the results and try to develop them further, which is likely to be futile.
 - The scientific archive is a trusted resource. If that trust is broken, it could bring the entire archive into question.
 - The results from the predatory papers may be used to advertise products to the public. Indeed, this may be the prime motivation for the publication.
2. **Cost to the taxpayer:** Much research is funded by the taxpayer, with the funds being distributed by research funding agencies. If some of that money is used to pay the article processing charges to predatory publishers/journals, this is a waste of taxpayers' money which could be used for other research and/or other services that would benefit the general public.
3. **Damage to your CV:** If your CV is littered with papers published in predatory journals, or even if you have only published one or two, this will harm your CV.
4. **Lack of impact:** Papers you publish in predatory journals are unlikely to get the attention you might get if you published your paper in a non-predatory journal. This is due to many reasons, including:
 - The journals are not so well known, so they are unlikely to be the "go-to" place for those looking for a paper to cite.
 - Predatory journals tend to be broad, so it may be challenging to find a paper in your discipline among the many others which have nothing to do with your field.
 - Even if your paper is professionally written and is underpinned by robust research, it is likely to be among papers that are not of the same quality. As a result, your paper could be ignored because the journal does not publish high-quality papers worth citing.
 - Predatory journals are unlikely to be indexed by the major bibliographic databases (such as Web of Science and Scopus), so they may not be on the radar of researchers who rely on those databases as their primary source of references.

... [further reading](#)

— Why do authors publish in predatory journals?

1. **Lack of awareness:** Some scholars will be unaware of predatory publishing (70.8%; Kurt, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1150>) and will submit to predatory journals in good faith, pay the fees and may never be aware that they have been duped.
2. **Social identity threat:** A social identity threat is caused by somebody feeling inferior to others. In the context of scientific publishing, there can be several ways that this can manifest itself. For example, if a scholar is working in a developing country and they do not feel that they have the same opportunities as those working in more high-income countries.
 - Predatory journals are more likely to have editorial boards drawn from a single or very few countries. One of the things that good quality journals strive for is a truly international editorial board, along with other balances such as gender and representatives from across the sub-disciplines that are covered in the journal.
 - Another social identity threat is religion. In Kurt's article, he gives an example where a scholar refused to send his/her/their paper to a journal as the logo looked like a cross, on the basis that this was of religious significance and a signal that only Western authors were invited.
 - There were also worries about unfair bias towards certain names and/or countries.
 - One further social identity threat is not being a native English speaker/writer and the challenges that this gives, even if the scientific quality is present behind the writing. It is felt that a paper is rejected as the writing is bad and, therefore, the research is presumed to be bad as well.
3. **Pressure to publish:** The pressure to publish, often encapsulated in the phrase "publish or perish", is one of the most frequently cited reasons scholars publish in predatory journals.
 - However, it is not just the fact that predatory journals will have much lower requirements than traditional or legitimate open-access journals; it is the speed with which you can publish.
 - It depends on the discipline in which you work, but when you submit to a legitimate journal, it could take six months to get the first review and then six months to do the required revisions and get the paper accepted. Some disciplines will be faster and some slower, but getting a paper accepted within two months would be exceptionally fast.
 - Predatory journals often work much faster than this. There are examples where the submission date is the same as the acceptance/publication date.

- The point is, if you submit to a predatory journal, the likelihood of being accepted is extremely high (if not guaranteed) and the time from submission to acceptance is likely to be incredibly low. These two factors are so attractive to scholars who are under pressure to publish a certain number of papers within a given time window. Whether this ultimately improves your CV is a moot point.
- We would also observe that the reason why review times are so fast, and thus publication is rapid, is because there is little (if any) peer review.

4. **Lack of research proficiency:** Researchers from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) cited their lack of skills in key research methodologies such as statistics, ethics, and research protocols. After being rejected from a high-quality journal, they did not know how to address the reviewers' comments, so they unknowingly sent the paper to a predatory journal where the chances of having their paper accepted were much higher.

They also said their university insisted on a strong publication record but did not provide adequate support and/or training. Hence, the scholars were ill-equipped to get their research published in higher-quality journals, which is why they had to trade down.

[... further reading](#)

In case of further questions or need for guidance, you may contact your Center Librarians/Communication team/Knowledge management staff or your Organization's Legal Office for additional support in reviewing publishing agreements and publishing terms and conditions.

Consulted resources

How to respond to and what to do for papers published in predatory journals?

Aamir Raof Memon

Sci Ed 2018; 5(2): 146-149

<https://doi.org/10.6087/kcse.140>

Stack Exchange Network

<https://academia.stackexchange.com/questions/148856/can-i-submit-in-a-new-journal-after-submission-in-a-predatory-journal-who-force>

What is Predatory Publishing? | ... and should you care?

Predatory Publishing [Website]

<https://predatory-publishing.com/what-is-predatory-publishing-and-should-you-care>

Why do authors publish in predatory journals?

Serhat Kurt

Learned Publishing Volume 31, Issue 2 p. 141-147

<https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1150>