In higher education contexts, and particularly in graduate programs, there is an expectation to publish original, peer-reviewed research as a measure of academic and professional success. Predatory publishing and other deceptive practices present a problem for researchers, writers, and students in higher education settings. “Predatory” publishers, over 2000 of them to date, pretend to be publishers of legitimate open access journals. They appear genuine, often soliciting authors to submit their manuscripts, then entrapping them with false claims of peer review and journal ranking. Predatory publishers exploit academicians by charging fees for manuscript processing, peer-review, publication, and document archiving, without providing robust peer review or proper editorial oversight, sometimes without publishing the paper at all. They do not follow standard policies for high quality scholarly publishing such as those outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME). Nor do they meet the accepted standards for professional scientific publications. Faculty and students alike should scrutinize journals that promise quick turnaround in the peer review and publication process. The proliferation of both legitimate and predatory journals has made identifying predatory ones more difficult.

It is important to note that many legitimate open access publications charge fees to process, archive, and/or publish research. These journals provide proper reviews and authentic impact ratings. They should not be considered “predatory”. Legitimate open access journals are listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (doaj.org). It is recommended that researchers and students refer to the DOAJ rather than online “blacklists”, many of which contain biased, unreliable, incorrect, or outdated information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

College of Education faculty and researchers work closely with students and mentees to guide them through the process of developing the critical skills needed to identify a legitimate high-quality peer reviewed venue for publishing. Faculty who teach research methodology courses within specific disciplines are encouraged to initiate discussions about predatory publishing, and to explore ways to differentiate between predatory and legitimate publishers using appropriate criteria. While there is no failsafe method for determining the status of a journal, authors can follow the core practices and policies developed by reputable organizations such as The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), and the Council of Science Editors (CSE) to increase the likelihood identifying a legitimate journal or publisher.
RESOURCES

- Identifying Predatory Publishers (University of Utah Library)
- Checklist to identify reputable publishers (California State University Long Beach Library)
- Predatory Publishing Defined guidelines from Eastern Michigan University Library
- University of Pittsburgh guide to identification of illegitimate and predatory publishing
- Understanding Predatory Publishers is a guide to four common types of behavior that characterize predatory publishers (Iowa State University Library)
- Think. Check. Submit ([https://thinkchecksubmit.org](https://thinkchecksubmit.org)) is a checklist developed by a coalition of scholarly publishing organizations. The site offers a criteria and FAQs to assist researchers in identifying legitimate peer-reviewed journals to publish scholarship. The site provides tools and resources to increase awareness of how to find trustworthy journals that adhere to rigorous academic integrity standards.
- Think Check Attend ([https://thinkcheckattend.org](https://thinkcheckattend.org)) is a sister site to ThinkCheckSubmit that provides guidelines and information on how to judge the legitimacy and academic credentials of organizations holding scholarly conferences
- Principles of Transparency and Best Practices in Scholarly Publishing ([https://doaj.org/bestpractice](https://doaj.org/bestpractice)) provides an informative list of steps to take to conduct a thorough review of the principles of transparency and best practice for scholarly publications.
- National Institute of Health (NIH) statement on predatory publishing
- Johns Hopkins Sheridan Library statement on predatory journals and conferences
- Predatory Journals: A Call to Action for the Field of Education (Allen, 2019)
- UNM Academic Integrity & Research Ethics
- Wikipedia on Predatory Publishing
Adapted from Laine & Winker (2017), Identifying Predatory or Pseudo-Journals

**Figure 1. Predatory Journals Decision Map**

- Presence of features identified as potentially problematic and/or absence of criteria on “Think, Check, Submit” website

  - Is the journal on DOAJ list?
    - Yes
      - Does journal meet DOAJ seal criteria?
        - Yes
          - Probably legitimate
        - No
          - Check the journal website and read the practices/policies for “warning sign” features
    - No
      - Further investigation may be needed
  - No
    - Probably legitimate

- Probably legitimate

Adapted from Laine & Winker (2017), Identifying Predatory or Pseudo-Journals