

## Science & Society Characteristics of Hijacked Journals and Predatory Publishers: Our Observations in the Academic World

Mehdi Dadkhah,<sup>1,\*</sup>  
Tomasz Maliszewski,<sup>2</sup> and  
Mohammad Davarpanah Jazi<sup>1</sup>

**The academic world today includes hijacked journals and predatory publishers that operate based on a 'pay and publish' model and function for financial reasons only. Here we present lesser known aspects and practices of these journals to researchers, showing the core of the problem.**

### Introduction

The modern academic world faces many unprecedented challenges and threats that include hijacked journals and predatory publishers. Jeffrey Beall defined the terms predatory journals and publishers for the first time in 2010 [1]. Some journals or publishers accept manuscripts that are flawed in terms of scientific quality (without peer review or by conducting low-quality review) and publish them by receiving charges without providing acceptable publishing services. These journals will be classified as predatory journals [2]. Beall started his research by collecting calls for papers from different journals and, based on them, created his first list of 20 predatory publishers in 2010. With the growing number of predatory publishers, he created two separate lists that contain names of predatory publishers and predatory standalone journals [1]. Beall also defined criteria for the detection of predatory publishers and launched a website to reveal new predatory

publishers that he made available for researchers (<https://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/>).

Predatory publishers are a real challenge for the academic world; they are repositories for bogus research that can be cited and used by other authors. This can falsify the real picture of scientific research and hinder credible research development. These research publications may be dangerous in some domains, such as biology, health care, and medical science. After Beall's study, many editors and researchers started to examine the problem of predatory publishers more thoroughly. They introduced a list of probable predatory scholarly open-access journals [2]. Some authors have encouraged authors to boycott predatory journals because they believe that predators will increase only as long as authors keep submitting papers and pay publishing charges to them [3,4].

The term hijacked journals was used for the first time in early 2012 after cybercriminals created the first hijacked journal by registering the expired domain sciencerecord.com in 2011 [5]. Hijacked journals are websites that mimic the names and International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSNs) of reputable journals and publish papers without review by receiving charges. The sciencerecord.com domain had three hijacked journals and seven fake journals, which included *Science Series Data Report*, *Innova Ciencia*, and *Science and Nature*. The hijackers used fake and unregistered ISSNs for their predatory journals, which included *America Scientist*, *International Research Journal of Humanities*, *International Research Journal of Engineering and Technologies*, *International Journal of Medical Discovery*, *International Journal of Professional Artist*, *Pioneer Architects & Urban Designers*, and *International Research Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*. There are clear differences between hijacked journals and predatory ones. A hijacked journal uses a fake website that mimics the

look of a reputable journal; a predatory journal establishes a new brand but has questionable peer review and publishes papers by receiving money.

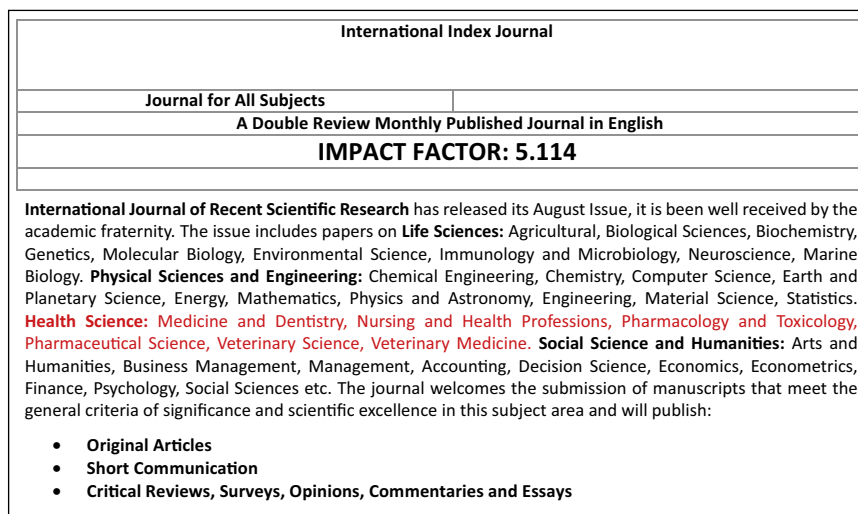
We have researched journal hijackers [6] and bogus impact factors [7] to address challenges related to hijacked journals. According to our mining of academic sources such as Scopus, Thomson Reuters, and Google Scholar, most research discusses the challenges connected to hijacked journals and predatory publishers and presents techniques for detecting them. Our observations found that hijacked journals and predatory publishers have similar characteristics, which we present here.

### Hijacked Journals and Predatory Publishers

Forgers launch new hijacked journals and predatory publishers frequently. It is obvious that these questionable journals cannot continue their growth without authors. It is thus important to find out as much as possible about both types of threats to scientific publications and to disseminate these findings in academic circles to educate authors.

### The Increasing Problem

We regularly receive calls for papers from new journals. Many predatory journals publish an excess of papers from low-income countries [1], for a number of different reasons. For instance, the research and/or paper development may be of low quality and will, therefore, be acceptable only by predatory journals, which typically do not have credible review processes. In most low-income countries the number of published papers is more important than the quality of those publications [8]. People with more published papers have more academic eminence. Another reason may be that, in some developing countries, a student with more published papers has a better chance of being accepted on a PhD program. In most developing countries, institutes and universities encourage their students to



Trends in Pharmacological Sciences

Figure 1. A Predatory Journal's Call for Papers with Announcement of Bogus Impact Factor.

publish papers in journals with high impact factors or reputable indexing. Many predatory journals claim high impact factors in their calls for papers, which can encourage authors to submit their papers to them. Unfortunately, these impact factors are bogus impact factors, calculated by incompetent companies [7]. Figure 1 shows a call for papers with a bogus impact factor that we received by email on 1 October 2015. As shown in this figure, the call for papers announced that the journal has been indexed and has an impact factor, although it is a bogus impact factor. Also note that the journal claims to publish papers in an usually large number of disciplines.

Some predatory journals claim reputable indexing – in Scopus and Thomson Reuters, for instance – and this indexing encourages authors to submit papers to these journals. The number of indexed predatory journals is not large and, according to our experience, most will be dropped from the indexing center as soon as they are discovered to be predatory. Ministries of science in individual countries may also add predatory journals to a list of invalid publications. The increasing demand by authors to publish papers in indexed journals (especially in Thomson

Reuters) is a good opportunity for forgers to create hijacked journals that appear authentic.

Figure 2 shows a hijacked journal's call for papers with a claim of prestigious indexing that we received by email on 4 September 2015. In some cases, authors have published many papers in predatory or hijacked journals, which poses a question: how do these authors find the money to publish so many papers? In some countries, universities allocate funds to authors who publish papers in Thomson Reuters-indexed journals. Publishing papers in hijacked journals is easy and authors can publish many papers in these journals and receive funds from their universities to do so.

Forgers take advantage of careless universities; most invalid university publication lists are not updated. In many cases, individual universities and – unfortunately – the researchers themselves are not aware of the threats. This is especially true for senior researchers, who in many cases do not have knowledge of hijacked journals and consider them to be predatory journals. However, there are clear differences between hijacked journals and predatory publishers: a hijacked

journal uses – as mentioned above – a fake website for a reputable journal. A predatory journal is a real online publication with a primary focus on making money. The best way to deal with hijacked journals and predatory publishers is to update invalid journal lists, detailing the rules applied by universities for proper selection of journals, and to publish the results. In places facing the challenges of hijacked (and predatory) journals it would also be worthwhile to develop education and training for academic staff. Let us reiterate that hijacked journals and predatory publishers will keep growing only if authors keep submitting papers to them.

### Middleman in Paper Publishing

One constant question about hijacked journals is how does a hijacked journal receive so many papers? The main answer is with the help of paper-publishing companies, which sell their services to academics and researchers to help them get published. When a hijacked journal is launched, paper-publishing companies send proposals to these journals and negotiate discounts for each paper their company sends for publication. For example, assume that a hijacked journal receives US\$200 to publish one paper, but then a paper-publishing company

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2572444>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2572444>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)