

## Background and Objective

- The pressure to publish has been identified as a source of vulnerability among researchers who want to publish their work, making them susceptible to the so-called predatory journals (PJ)
- The objective of this review was to gather evidence on the topic of PJ and predatory publishing and synthesize it according to themes to map the available body of evidence on the subject

## Methods

- A search was performed using four online databases (Web of Science, PubMed, Cab Direct, and SCOPUS) to include both peer-reviewed articles and grey literature published between 2011 and 2020
- Articles were screened for relevance by reading the title and abstract, and assessing its content that should refer to any of the following eight themes:
  - definition, characteristics, and business model of PJ
  - author motivation to publish in PJ
  - profile of authors publishing in PJ
  - geographical profile of targeted authors
  - impact of predatory publishing
  - solution approaches to predatory publishing
  - gaps identified in the literature
  - emerging insights on the issue of PJ
- Included articles were downloaded in full, reviewed, and information extracted individually by three reviewers, using data extraction tools (a Word document template for the qualitative data relating to the themes and an Excel spreadsheet for capturing data pertaining to the geographical and author profile, the type of article, and the research methodology used)

## Findings

- The search yielded 479 unduplicated results, of which 113 met the inclusion criteria and were downloaded in full for data extraction

**Table 1.** Breakdown of articles included in this review by type

Type of article	n
Blogs	1
Commentary	23
Editorial	34
Letter to the editor	2
News article	6
Research paper	26
Review	12
Other*	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>

\*Such as correspondence or viewpoint papers

- We identified and summarized information pertaining to eight themes:

### 1 Definition, characteristics, and business model

- “Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices” (Grudniewicz, et al., 2019)

### 2 Author motivation to publish in PJ

- Career progression or research appraisal ambitions/ pressure to publish
- Lack of integrity
- Lack of awareness/ familiarity (e.g., junior researchers or those publishing outside their discipline)
- Assurance of publication/ pressure to publish

## Findings

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### Profile of authors publishing in PJ

- PJ target authors from any discipline
- Early career researchers and those in growing disciplines are at the highest risk
- Authors unaware of predatory practices (e.g., those with few to no publications in high impact journals, and have had a high number of rejections)
- Researchers to whom English is a second language

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### Geographical profile of targeted authors

- Authors publishing in PJ are more likely to be based in the Global South, although authors from all over the world may fall prey to predatory practices

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### Impact of predatory publishing

- Discredit of respectable publishers, authors, and institutions
- Diminished research impact
- Distrust of medical research
- Waste of research resources
- Loss of research quality
- Stunted development of open access publishing

- Raising awareness of the issue, which can be done in several ways:
  - capacity building forums and mentorship of students, junior researchers, and staff in academic/ research institutions to increase awareness (e.g., academic writing process, preparing manuscripts, choosing appropriate journals for submission, publication ethics)
  - research integrity and ethics preventive activities (e.g., publishing articles to raise awareness)
  - education of academic and institutional librarianship
  - position statements issued by professional communities

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### Solution approaches to predatory publishing

- Practicing due diligence before manuscript submission or when approached by journals (carefully researching and checking the publisher and journal to verify legitimacy, verifying peer-review process, confirming journal is indexed, consulting with senior colleagues and librarians)

- Referring to cross-disciplinary, online-based resources to evaluate potential journals and/or identify PJ: Beall's list/ “Stop Predatory Journals” initiative, Think. Check. Submit, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Journal/Author Name Estimator (JANE), Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunity, Thomson Reuters' Journal Citation Reports

- Realignment of research incentives (e.g., education of promotion and tenure committees (quality vs. quantity) and investment in research evaluation)
- Accountability for publishers (e.g., regulatory oversight, copyright infringement claims)
- Technological solutions (e.g., software to track false or suspicious journals, improving cyber security of legitimate journals to prevent phishing and hijacking)
- Collaborative effort (authors, reviewers, editors, publishers, funding agencies, academic institutions, and interdisciplinary communities of practice everywhere)
- Actively denying any involvement

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### Gaps identified in the literature

- Different checklists may cause confusion among authors
- Lack of integration of sociocultural perspectives into the discussion

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### Emerging insights on the issue of PJ

- Power inequalities along the Global South and North divide have determined the rise in PJ, often associated with the Global South, where the growth in consumption is rampant
- Global North is the traditional producer of scientific publications, bearing a gatekeeping role that may be regarded as a form of “information imperialism”. The discussion around PJ should give room for self-reflection and open communication about factors and motivations shaping publishing choices and practices