

# Building a Trustworthy Research Environment: Challenges and Solutions to Predatory Practices

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Project
  
2020

# Combatting Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences

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## National academies plan assault on predatory journals

By Robin Bisson

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Research Europe | 30 July 2020

Nations | 19

### World

## Academies to target predatory journals

Project aims to map global impact of bad practices in publishing and scale up interventions

Robin Bisson

An international project to determine the scale of predatory publishing practices is looking to harness the authority of national academies to turn the tide on profit-driven, bad-faith journals taking advantage of researchers.

Predatory journals offer rapid publication of research papers, but often lack robust peer review, and their main aim is to collect fees from researchers. There is also an increasing trend for predatory conferences that present like standard scientific meetings but lack quality control over presentations and charge exorbitant attendance fees.

"A lot of people either don't know this is an issue or think it's just an issue for the developing world," said Teresa Stoepler, executive director of policy at the InterAcademy Partnership. The global network counts more than 140 science, engineering and medical academies among its members, including the European Academies Science Advisory Council, the National

Academy of Sciences in the United States, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and African Academy of Sciences.

"We really don't know the extent of the problem globally, but it seems to be widespread and has potential to damage early career researchers, individual careers and collaborate throughout the research enterprise," said Stoepler.

By the end of 2021, the team behind it hopes to produce recommendations for research institutions, policymakers, publishers and funders.

Elliot said funders in particular are a key lever in combatting predatory practices. "In some cases they are funding poor quality research which is wasteful at best," she said.

Stoepler said unethical practices have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, with even legitimate, non-predatory publishers being overwhelmed by the volume of submissions.

In June two medical journals, the Lancet and the New England Journal of Medicine, retracted papers, including one that had halted international trials of the experimental Covid-19 drug hydroxychloroquine, due to questions over the data underlying them.

"Some of the information that's getting out there to policymakers on Covid-19 is alarming," said Elliott. "Whether the articles are retracted or not, they are still there in the public domain."

Another study will look at research evaluation practices and how they may exacerbate the growth of predatory journals and conferences, emphasising publication at all costs.

"We are challenging a well-established system, and in addressing research evaluation we would be challenging it even more," said Elliott. ◀

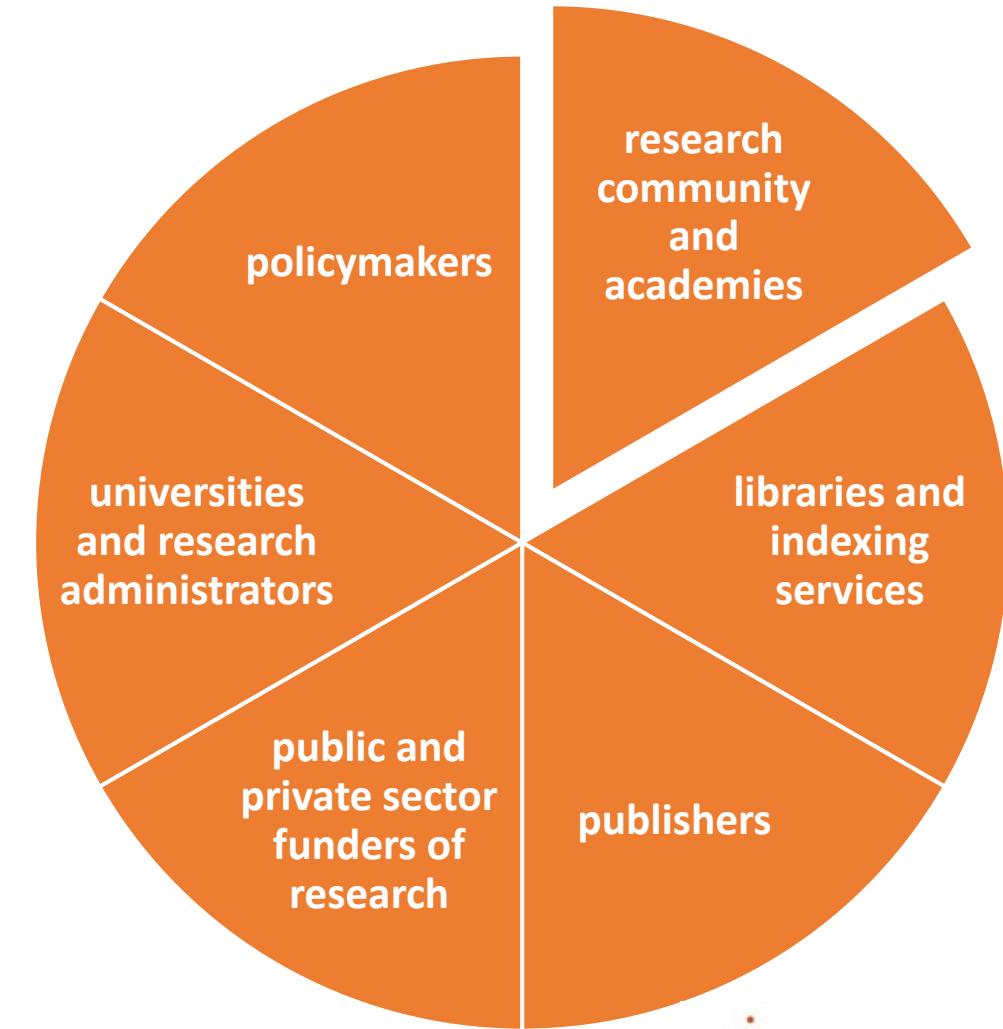
 "Some of the information getting out there to policymakers on Covid-19 is alarming."

Tracey Elliott, project director at the InterAcademy Partnership



# Study objectives

- Define predatory and unethical practices in academic journals and conferences
- Gauge their prevalence and impact
- Understand the primary drivers or root causes
- Examine efforts to-date to combat predatory journals and conferences around the world
- Provide concrete recommendations for a GLOBAL STRATEGY to address the problem, that engages all key stakeholders



# Literature review

COMMENT · 11 DECEMBER 2019

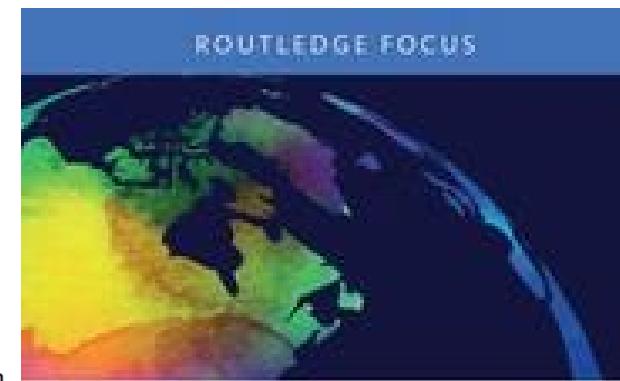
## Predatory journals: no definition, no defence

Leading scholars and publishers from ten countries have agreed a definition of predatory publishing that can protect scholarship. It took 12 hours of discussion, 18 questions and 3 rounds to reach.



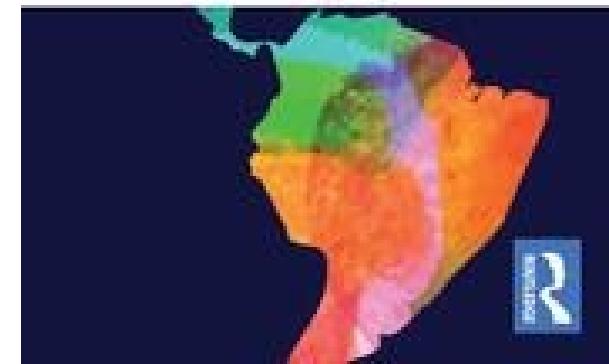
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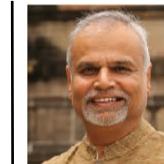
Predatory  
Publishing

JINGFENG XIA



 DOAJ

WORLD VIEW *A personal take on events*



## India strikes back against predatory journals

Our foe is determined and adaptable, says Bhushan Patwardhan. A list of credible titles is the latest salvo in the fight against shoddy scholarship.

WORLD VIEW *A personal take on events*



## Illegitimate journals scam even senior scientists

Kelly Cobey has seen a litany of researchers preyed on by predatory journals – and has ideas on how to stop it.

## Predatory conferences 'now outnumber official scholarly events'

UK researcher who travelled to predatory conference in Denmark calls for greater awareness of problem



Predatory conference scammers are getting  
smarter

 ASSAf  
ACADEMY OF SCIENCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

# Landmark survey of researchers

Total participants

**1872**

Total countries

**112**

Opportunity

Fri, 30 October 2020

Calling all researchers to participate in a landmark survey on academic predatory journals and conferences

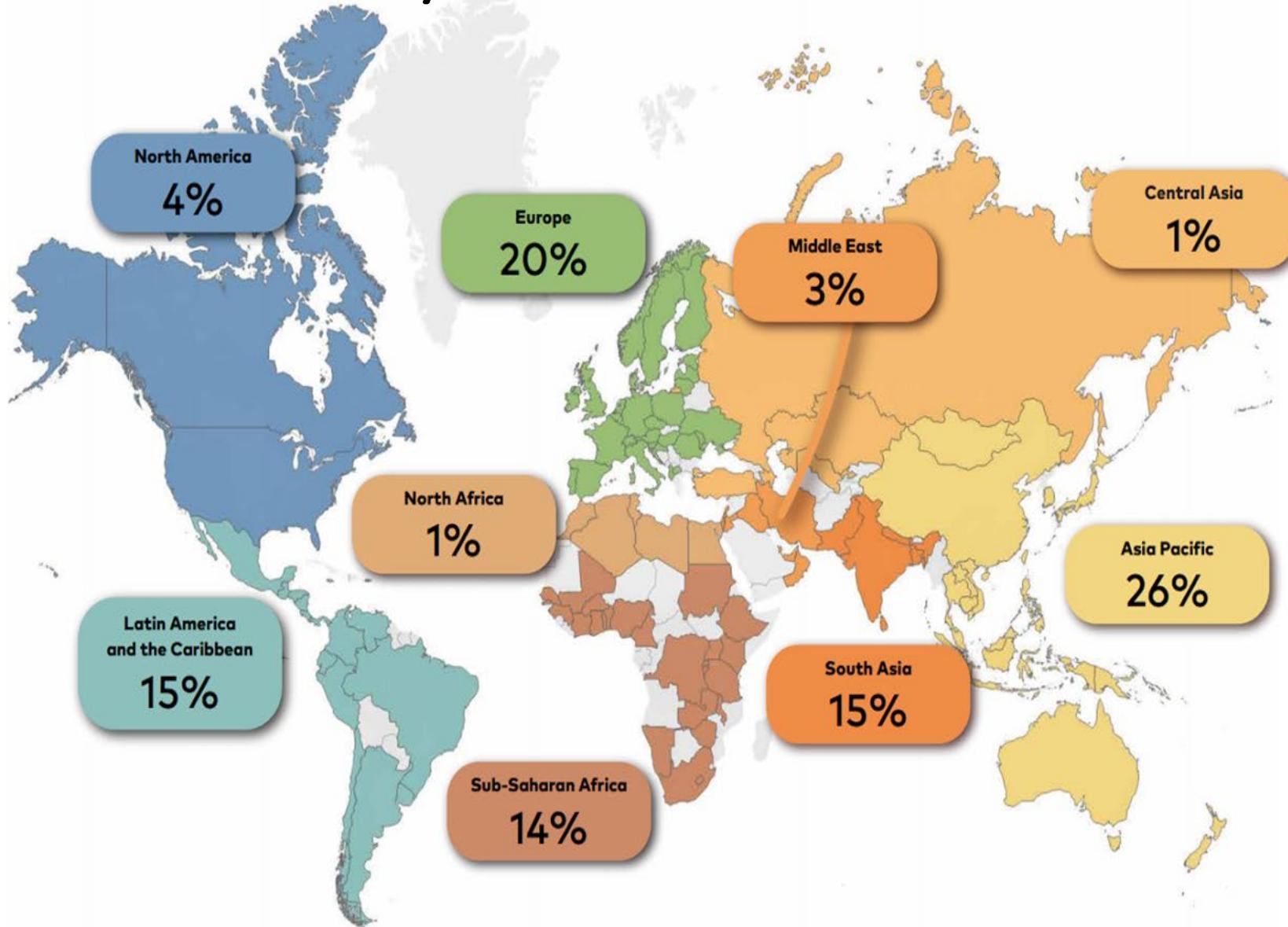


Policy for Science

Deadline  
Nov 30

**Over 80%**

perceive that **predatory practices** are a **serious problem** or on the rise in their country of work.



# Survey headlines

- Researchers at **ALL career stages** need to be on their guard
- Researchers in **low and middle income countries** are more vulnerable
- Some **disciplines** are more vulnerable than others
  - researchers in arts and humanities with predatory journals
  - researchers in transdisciplinary & engineering sciences with predatory conferences
- **At least 14%** of respondents admit they have used a predatory journal or conference
- This equates to **over 1.2 million researchers** of the 8.8m around the world who could have used predatory outlets, with **billions of dollars of research costs** (people, materials, time) wasted as a result. **This requires urgent attention.**

## At least 24% of respondents have either published in a predatory journal, participated in a predatory conference, or don't know if they have.

**They were not aware at the time**

**“The conference looked very legitimate and non predatory. There was support from the university and several well known professors were in the invitations.”**

**They needed to advance their career**

**“You need to publish in a predatory journal to stay in the race.”**

**It was a faster, easier, or cheaper option**

**“I feel guilty but it is necessary to publish (in predatory journals) for my students to complete their study faster due to the limitation of time and scholarship.”**

**They were encouraged by their peers**

**“The lead author suggested we publish in a predatory journal after a few rejections and one co-author was an editor at the journal, which made it difficult to criticize.”**



**science & technology**

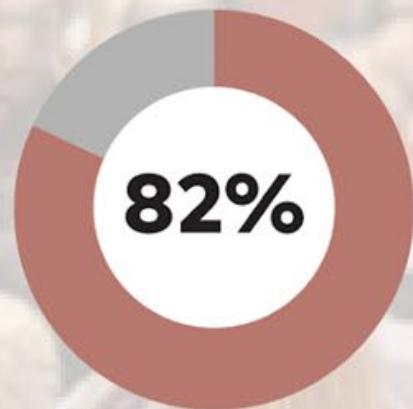
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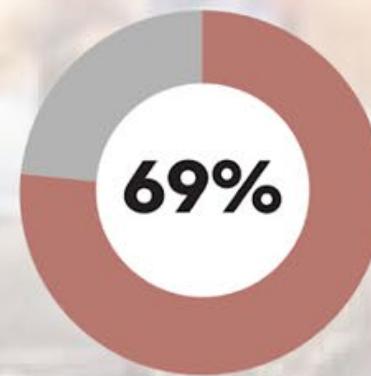
# Why is it important to address these practices

If left unchallenged, the majority of respondents believe predatory practices will have detrimental effects.

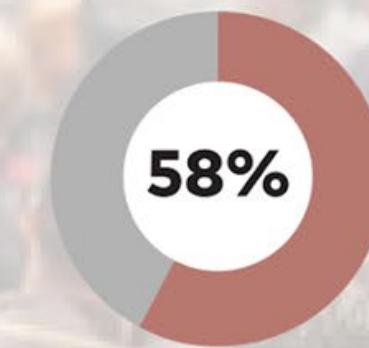
**Fuel misinformation  
in public policy**



**Infiltrate and  
undermine the  
research enterprise**



**Widen the research  
gap between high  
income and low  
income countries**



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# Some personal accounts

*"Wherever my CV went (whether it was to societal memberships, communities of practice or hiring institutions), people would highlight and question my predatory publications. It has become a **really obvious black dot in my career.**"*

*"The experience was bad as I had **no option of omitting/removing my name from these journals.**"*

*"It has **delayed my PhD completion by many years** because after that discouragement set in, I disconnected and am now trying to pick up the pieces. It is hard."*

*"I really regret it. **Our reputations get tarnished and people start judging us for many years.** It becomes a painful experience, especially for academics who started off just wanting to share their knowledge and contributions to the world and nothing more."*

*"Unfortunately, I had over 20-25 papers sacrificed in these journals. They can't be considered for promotion, and I **become a questionable researcher** everywhere my CV goes. Everyone looked down on me. I lost a few good friends and even broke into tears once in public because **I was so ashamed.** **It was a truly painful experience.**"*

# A spectrum of predatory behaviours



# Examples of resources already available

A beginner's guide to avoiding 'predatory' journals



<https://predatoryjournals.com/publishers/>

🚫 Stop Predatory Journals



## Predatory Reports

Specialists analyze over 60 behavioral indicators to keep the community aware of the growing threats and to keep academia protected from exploitative operations.

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International Congress and Convention Association

[Predatory Conferences](#)

## Tips on How to Identify and Avoid Predatory Conferences

**latindex**

Online Regional Information System for Scientific Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

❗ **THINK** ✓ **CHECK** ➤ **SUBMIT**

Choose the right journal or publisher for your research

❗  
**THINK**

✓  
**CHECK**

➤  
**ATTEND**

# Drivers or root causes

- **The monetisation and commercialisation of the research sector**, including an academic publishing system whose proprietary and commercial interests may lead to conflict with research integrity, with the **author-pays model** being especially prone to abuse.
- **Quantity-over-quality research evaluation systems**, together with the institutional drivers and incentives that shape the behaviour of individual academics.
- **The lack of transparency (whether fully open, anonymised or hybrid) in the peer-review process**, exacerbated by poor training, capacity and recognition of peer reviewers.



# Common features of “predatory” journals and conferences

- They solicit articles from researchers through practices that exploit the pressure on researchers to publish and present their work.
- Features include, but are not limited to:
  - rapid pay-to-publish/present models without rigorous (or indeed any) peer review
  - fake editorial or conference boards falsely listing respected scientists
  - fraudulent impact factors or metrics
  - journal and conference titles that are deceptively similar to legitimate ones
  - The deliberate deception of authors by either hiding or not disclosing fees (APC, handling fees, fast-track fees, etc.)
  - False claims of indexing in Web of Science and/or Scopus and other databases of companies that provide fake and misleading services

# Common features of “predatory” journals and conferences (2)

- Features include, but are not limited to:
  - Aggressive spam invitations to solicit articles and abstracts, including outside of a researcher's own expertise
    - Daily indiscriminate emails to prospective authors
    - Increasingly familiar and flattering language
    - The use of business marketing language, for example, submit two articles and pay for one
  - Inappropriate journal title and scope
    - A broader disciplinary scope
    - A combination of scientific disciplines with very little in common
    - Copying the titles of acclaimed journals, for example, Science and Nature
- These genuinely fraudulent practices continue to evolve and are becoming more difficult to distinguish between low-quality, unethical, and questionable publishing and conferencing practices.

# Examples of fake indexing listed on a predatory journal website

**EAS Publishers**

Home Journals For Authors ▾ For Editors ▾ For Reviewers ▾ Membership ▾ Payments Copyright

 **ICMJE**  
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF MEDICAL JOURNAL EDITORS

 **DRJI** Directory of Research Journals Indexing

 **SJI Factor**  
Scientific Journal Impact Factor

 **Journal Seeker Research Bible**

 **Crossref member**

 **ESJI** [www.ESJIndex.org](http://www.ESJIndex.org) Eurasian Scientific Journal Index

 **WorldCat** OCLC

 **INDEX COPERNICUS INTERNATIONAL**

 **Google Scholar**

 **ICI** WORLD of JOURNALS

 **Academic Keys** UNLOCKING ACADEMIC CAREERS

 **SIS** Scientific Indexing Services

**TOP EDITORS**

Dr. Md. Habibur Rahman  
Chief Editor  
EAS Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology

Dr. Benard Chemwei, PhD  
Chief Editor  
East African Scholars Multidisciplinary Bulletin

NFI Joseph Lon  
Chief Editor  
EAS Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies

**OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS**

JournalList.aspx

# Example: Physiotherapy

hosted by **DergiPark** AKADEMİK

English Login

## Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation

ISSN: 2651-4451 • e-ISSN: 2651-446X • Founded: 1974 • Period: Tri-quarterly • Publisher: Türkiye Fizyoterapistler Derneği

Search article in the journal



**ABOUT**

Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation is the official peer-reviewed scientific journal of the Turkish Physiotherapy Association. It is abbreviated as Turk J Physiother Rehabil. The journal publishes three issues at April, August and December, in Turkish and English. This is a open access journal and all rights of the journal belongs to Turkish Physiotherapy Association.

“Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation” is listed in Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), EBSCO, Excerpta Medica (EMBASE), Turkey Citation Index and Ulakbim TR Medical Index.

It is abbreviated as Turk J Physiother Rehabil.

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# Example: Physiotherapy

## Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation

**TJPR**

*Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation*

Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation is an open access, peer-reviewed, publishing online journal that encompasses all academic and clinical aspects of Physiotherapy, emphasizing on providing the base line data for the academic, clinical and research areas, thus to maintain the high level standards in the academic practice and research in the field of Physiotherapy.

[Aim & Scope](#)

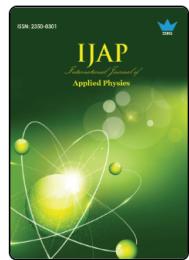
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## SSRG International Journal of Applied Physics ( IJAP )

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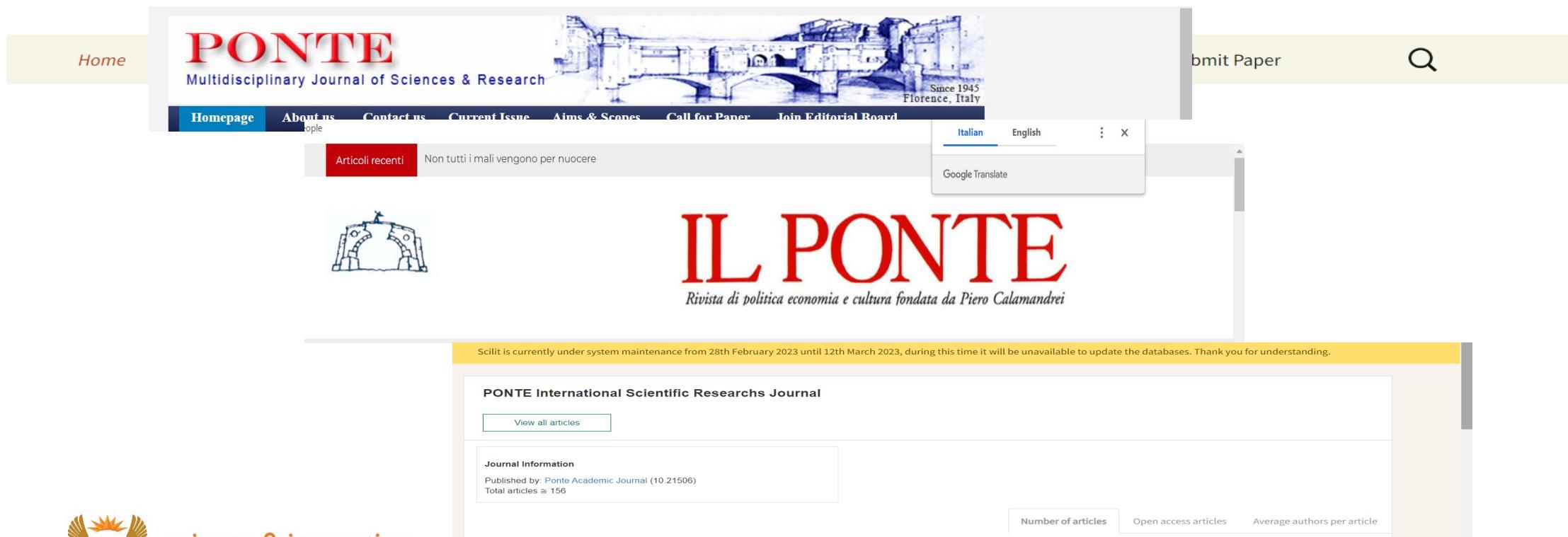
Editor-in-chief:  
Osama M.M. El-Shazly

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# Example: Multidisciplinary

## PONTE: Multidisciplinary Journal of Sciences and Research



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Multidisciplinary Journal of Sciences & Research

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Scilit is currently under system maintenance from 28th February 2023 until 12th March 2023, during this time it will be unavailable to update the databases. Thank you for understanding.

PONTE International Scientific Researchs Journal

View all articles

Journal Information

Published by: Ponte Academic Journal (10.21506)  
Total articles ≈ 156

Number of articles Open access articles Average authors per article

# The case of MDPI

I predatory journal +

e lock [predatoryreports.org/news/f/list-of-all-mdpi-predatory-publications](https://predatoryreports.org/news/f/list-of-all-mdpi-predatory-publications)

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## List of all MDPI predatory journals

February 22, 2023 | MDPI, Predatory Publishing



**MDPI** as a publisher of open-access scientific journals was spun off from the Molecular Diversity Preservation International organization. It was formally registered by Shu-Kun Lin and Dietrich Rordorf in May 2010 with its official headquarters in Basel, Switzerland.

Including Switzerland, **MDPI** has editorial offices in 11

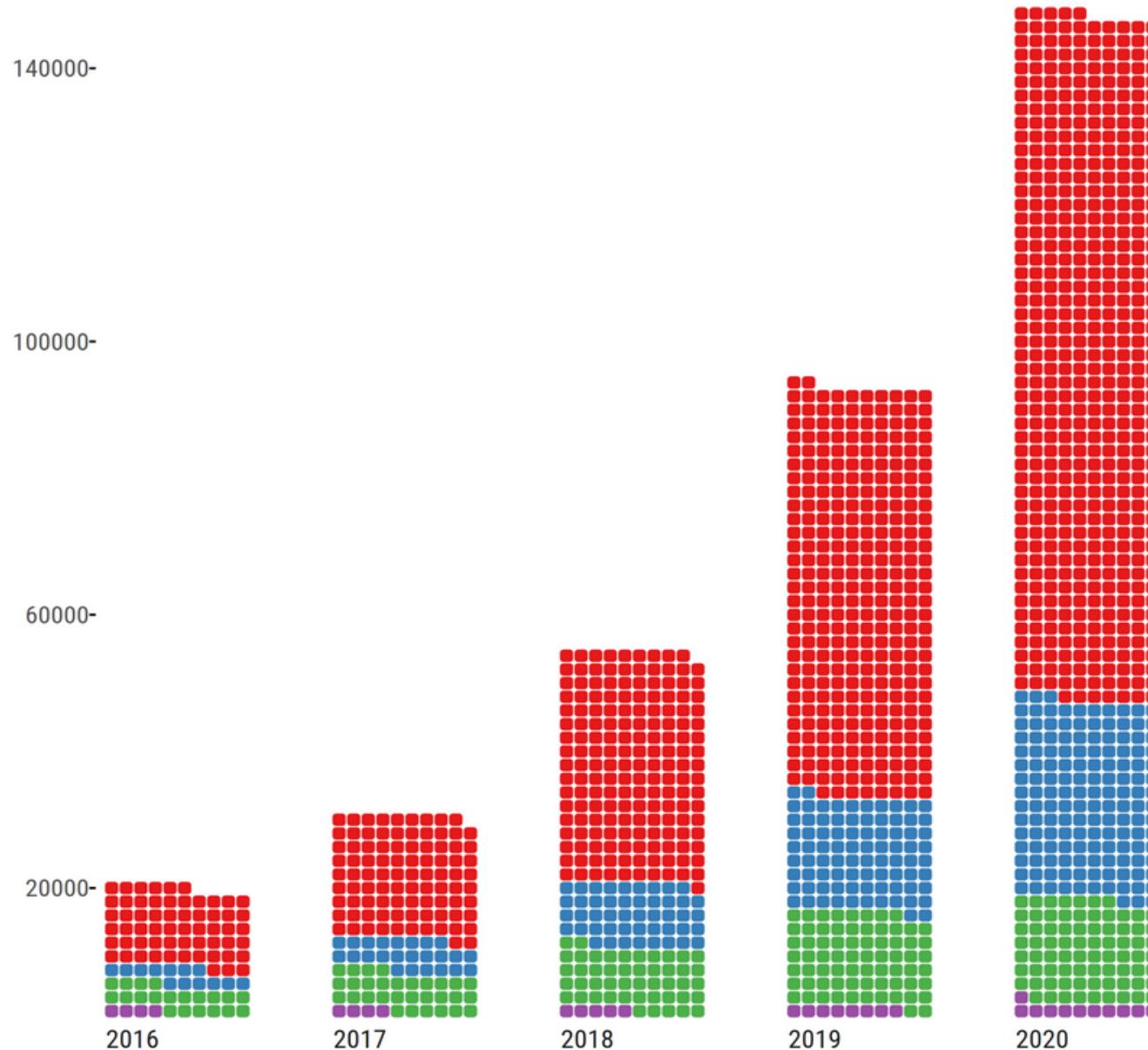
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o w x e t p s ? ^ d n v u s l

## Articles in Normal, Special Issues, Sections and Collections at MDPI

74 journals with an Impact Factor. One square = 200 articles



<https://paolocrosetto.wordpress.com/blog/>

# Is MDPI predatory?

- Has elements of both:
  - They have aggressive ways of rent-seeking (money-making) rather than predatory.
  - Current publishing practices and growth rates may shift them to predatory
- They are publishing good articles, but their strategies are questionable and on the verge of being predatory
- One — the good journals with high quality — create a rent that the other exploits — spamming hundreds of colleagues to solicit papers, an astonishing increase in Special Issues, publishing papers as fast as possible
- This strategy makes a lot of sense for MDPI, who shows strong growth rates and is *en route* to become the largest open access publisher in the world

<https://paolocrosetto.wordpress.com/blog/>

# Recommendations to authors, supervisors and mentors

- Practice due diligence to minimise risk
- Use the spectrum approach as a meta-level navigation tool.
- Get to know the common and most reliable characteristics/traits of predatory journals and conferences. If the journal or conference meets more than two of these, this should ring alarm bells, and they should be avoided.
- If a journal purports to be indexed in a reputable index e.g. Scopus, Web of Science, check personally and if found untrue, avoid such journals.

# Recommendations to authors, supervisors and mentors

- Check if a journal is listed in DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals); if it is, the journal is less likely to be problematic because it has been vetted. Similarly, check if a journal is a member of COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics), where it must follow COPE's publication ethics (COPE Core Practices).
- If a researcher's institution has its own list(s) of acceptable and unacceptable journals, or subscribes to Cabells Predatory Reports, use them with caution and cross-check with other resources in this report.
- Seek advice from their mentor/supervisor: if they are uninformed themselves, encourage them to train up.

# Recommendations to authors, supervisors and mentors

- Ignore SPAM e-mails; they will likely be SCAM emails
- Researchers should familiarise themselves with **peer-review good practice** and offer their services as a peer reviewer to help build capacity
- Actively participate in committees/other platforms to advocate for **quality-not-quantity evaluation**. Use journals and indexing services, universities and academies fora as platforms for change. **Be activists – help effect change.**

Thank you!!

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