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PROMOTING INTEGRITY IN
RESEARCH AND ITS PUBLICATION

Perspectives on Predatory Publishing and Thoughts about Solutions

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Presentation outline

1. A working definition of Predatory Publishing – a vexatious undertaking
2. Characteristics of Predatory Publication Processes
3. Resemblance and Obfuscation?
4. What's in a name?
5. Stakeholder Analysis of who and what is harmed by PP
6. Who publishes in PP journals and why?
7. Business Ethics and PP
8. Approaches to addressing the issues

Definitions of PP: A vexatious undertaking

A necessary condition is one which has to be true for a definition.

i.e., A is considered necessary for B, if and only if, the falsity of A guarantees the falsity of B.

e.g., Being fraudulent is a necessary condition of PP.

A condition A is said to be sufficient for condition B, if and only if, the truth of A guarantees the truth of B.

And here is the rub. People disagree about sufficient conditions of PP

Sooo... A condition A is necessary but not sufficient for defining B and people have differing opinions about what is sufficient.

Further, some characteristics that some people include in their definitions inadvertently capture non-PP journals as well.

False conclusion: If you can't come up with the necessary and sufficient conditions for defining PP, you are stuck, it is argued

Guess what folks: It is definitely a recognizable duck

Quack! Quack!



Characteristics of Predatory Publishing Processes

Cheating and Deception

1. PP cheat and deceive **some authors** (and indirectly funders and institutions) through charging publishing-related fees without providing expected or promised services.
2. PP deceive academics into serving on editorial boards when there is no legitimate role in oversight.
3. PP “appoint” editorial board members without their knowledge or permission.
4. In general, PP use no peer review.
5. PP impose mandatory publication fees as a condition of acceptance of an article.
6. PP refuse to retract or withdraw or ignore any request to do so.

Having said this, here goes – this is a work in progress. PP includes:

The systematic for profit promise and/or publication of a supposed academic product which presents itself as scholarly, legitimate, meritorious content (including in journals, monographs, books or conference proceedings) in a deceptive or fraudulent way – without any regard to quality assurance.

Other Characteristics of PP

1. Misleading reporting or lack of reporting (e.g., number of manuscripts accepted, rejected, withdrawn; list of peer reviewers).
2. Language issues, including poor grammar and low production quality.
3. Lack of ethical oversight, such as, declarations to do with ethics, particularly for animal and human studies.
4. Lack of declarations of conflicts of interest, study funding, and copyright and user licences
5. Lack of corrections or retractions.
6. Lack of qualified Editor-in-Chief (if any).
7. Fictitious rejection rates, false impact factors, false claims of being indexed in legitimate indexes.
8. Falsely claiming membership in publication ethics organizations, including forgery and falsifying logos of such organizations.

Resemblance - and Obfuscation

PP clearly try to hide the true nature of their journals by mimicry of legitimate publishers.

They do so by:

1. Stealing the title of a known, credible journal or creating a similar title to a known, credible journal
2. Stealing the name of a print only journal
3. Copying the name, website and fee structure of a journal but with a slightly different URL (i.e., journal hijacking)
4. Creating a website as a submission platform for multiple hijacked journals
5. Forging a logo of legitimate organizations on website falsely claiming membership (e.g., COPE)

Obfuscation

- This one is obvious. The purpose of the features of resemblance is to create a sham.
- It is intended to confuse, confound, dissemble.
- The purveyors of these fake journals are flim flam men. These are confidence scams to confuse the innocent.

Recruitment Strategies

- As many authors have noted (e.g., Carroll, 2016) one hallmark of recruitment of PP is massive ‘cold calling’ invitations to publish in the journal via email
- These invitations frequently include invitations to join the editorial board
- Eriksson and Helgesson (2017) also note that many of these invitations are out of scope with the invitees’ expertise as there is a “familiar piracy practice of spamming researchers’ email boxes with offers to submit papers in areas they know little or nothing about...”

What's in a name? Arguments against the term PP

There has been a lot of commentary criticizing the topic 'predatory publishing' as a misnomer

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE TERM

1. It is not descriptive or instructive of what it is supposedly describing (some suggest 'fake', 'rogue', 'questionable', parasitic, deceptive, etc.)
2. Predatory suggests victims, powerless people who are acted upon without their full knowledge while a number of studies have shown that some scholars knowingly publish in PP journals
3. Calling the issue PP obviates or mitigates personal responsibility in choosing where one publishes

What's in a name? Arguments for the term PP

- Since Jeffrey Beall coined the term, it has become accepted and used by many
- If we are all familiar with the term, why change it?
- Some people actually are victims who unknowingly submit their research, so it is an appropriate term for them

COPE position on naming the issue

Thus far, COPE is in the process of developing a discussion paper on PP. In the latest draft of that paper, COPE is currently undecided about the appropriate label of all that is a part of this set of practices.

Stakeholder Identification

If we look at PP through a stakeholder lens, the following issues emerge:

1. The innocent author who is duped

- Pays for service without receiving any of the basic services of academic publishing including constructive feedback through peer review
- May lose status when peers discover that author has published in a PP journal which may have a negative impact on job renewal, tenure and promotion
- May lead to investigation by university employer for unethical publication
- Damage may be long term as PP do not retract or withdraw articles that are accepted.

2. Legitimate Open Access Journals

- Confusion with PP open access may tarnish the reputation of reputable peer-reviewed open access journals.
- **3. Legitimate Journals which are not top ranked or may not entirely follow best practice journals may also be confused with PP**

4. Research and its funding sources

- Publication in a PP journal wastes resources, such as, university infrastructure and administrative support as well as research funding.
- Assuming the research was legitimate and carried out with research integrity, the findings of the funded research will be lost as authors cannot re-publish their articles in legitimate journals and PP journal articles will not be cited in citation indexes or be readily available to the research community.
- If the articles are published without peer review in PP journals, it is not clear whether the research would have been published in a peer-reviewed journal and would have become part of the scholarly record
- Conversely, if the research is shoddy and does get published by a PP journal, it may be cited and consequently will pollute the scholarly record
- If a scandal arises from the publication of funded research in a PP journal (such as journalistic exposes of the status of the journal in which the funded research is published) the scandal may tarnish and call into question the legitimacy and value of publicly funded research.

6. Universities and their role in knowledge creation

- As a corollary, the wider community may start to challenge the legitimacy of public funding for research and public funding of universities.

7. Citizens who contribute to the funding of research and of universities through taxation and donations

- Finally, ordinary citizens lose from PP tricksters for all of the reasons previously stated

Who publishes in PP journals and why? (Two populations and one hypothetical answer for why)

1. Some research confirms that the majority of authors come from countries in Asia and Africa (Shen and Bjork, 2015)
2. Increased pressure on world rankings of universities has increased the requirement that scholars publish significantly more which motivates the desire to seek the rapid publication which PP journals promise
3. (Curry and Lillis, 2018) suggest that the dominance of English as the lingua franca of scholarly publishing and citation indexes discriminates against researchers for whom English is a second language
4. Other researches from North America and Europe also knowingly publish in PP journals (Offord, 2018) including evidence from research with over 5000 German authors.

A Business Ethics Case: Moral and Legal Responses

- In many ways, PP is just another example of a violation of business ethics
- Business ethics violations occur when for profit businesses violate either laws and/or laws and ethical norms for the sole purpose of increasing profits
- At their worst, business ethics violations involve harming human beings (including financial and/or physical harm including death), animals and the environment. In the Enron example, all of these impacts on various constituencies were involved, including the loss of all long term retirement benefits from some investors
- As such, PP fits well into the roster of serious violations of business ethics.

Two approaches to the problem

Responses to PP are of two types or kinds.

Caveat Emptor

Caveat emptor (buyer beware) approaches to PP, is primarily the use of education as a mechanism to inform the uninformed author to the phenomenon of PP and its features.

1. A clear example of this is found in the material produced and distributed by 'Think, check, submit'.
2. Other empirical work provides data on the nature of PP, including information about the owners and promoters of PP.

Addressing and pursuing PP as businesses committing criminal acts

Clear example of this approach – Recently, (2019) the Federal Trade Commission in the United States won a court case against PP, OMICS and their companies. The court imposed a \$50.1 million fine on OMICS.

Complementary approach

- Clearly these two approaches are complementary and should both be encouraged.

Thanks very much for your attention!

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Thank you!
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Questions or Comments

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