The Predation Index: A Tool to Discover Predatory Journals

Annika Marlen Sabine Hinze, *Fordham University, USA*
Daniel Stockemer, *University of Ottawa, Canada*
Theresa Reidy, *University College Cork, Ireland*

ABSTRACT Predatory journals have become omnipresent in academia. Hardly a day goes by that a political scientist does not receive a solicitation from a dubious outlet. Yet, we have neither clearly identifiable criteria to help us recognize predatory journals nor the tools to detect them. This article seeks to remedy this situation. We propose and validate a 10-item predation index, which should help researchers to identify the degree to which a journal is predatory. Even if there is individual subjectivity in the application of the criteria, we believe that the predation index can be a strong and easily usable tool for political and social scientists.

Predatory publishing is exploitative and does not meet the minimum standards of research integrity. Predatory publishers are "counterfeit scholarly publishers that aim to trick honest researchers into thinking they are legitimate" (Beall 2017). They are "entities that prioritize self-interest 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, 211). To solicit manuscripts, predatory journals scrape departmental websites, conference programs, and other public information sites to identify potential authors and then use spam email to contact would-be authors with publication offers that sound too good to be true. Predatory journals do not follow best publication practices, they have little to no editorial oversight, and they do not adhere to ethical standards.

The proliferation of predatory journals with their aggressive targeting of individual scholars and the potential career perils of publishing in the "wrong" type of journal means that the publishing landscape is increasingly beset with peril—and not only for early-career scholars. This article asks, How can we identify a predatory journal? Scholars in the hard sciences such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), as well as in the medical field, began to identify predatory journals using systematic processes at an early stage amid concerns about the dissemination of "trash science" (Patwardhan 2019).[1] As a discipline, social science has been slow to address the pitfalls of predatory publishing. Scholarly associations have begun to discuss these matters (International Political Science Association World Congress 2025) but few publications exist that specifically address predatory publishing in the social sciences (Beall and DuBois 2016). Moreover, most of the literature on predatory journals is focused squarely on the hard sciences and biomedical research in particular.

This article makes a case for enhanced attention to publication literacy for students and scholars at all levels and in all fields of the academy. Specifically, we present a predation index in political science based on a clear operational definition and coding, thereby providing a tool that every scholar can use to protect the integrity of the publishing process and their own work.

PREDATORY PUBLISHING: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Navigating the world of academic publishing is an increasingly challenging process. "Publish or perish" has become a widespread mantra. International university rankings, university promotion and financial incentives, international funding-agency requirements, and national higher-education policies increase the pressure to publish. Supported by the digital transformation during recent decades, the market has responded with concomitant growth in the publishing industry. Established journals have migrated online, and few continue to provide print editions of their collections. In parallel with changes to the production model for journal publishing, the financial model has also changed. Academic publishing, like most other forms of publishing, was built on a "pay-to-read" structure throughout the twentieth century. Scholars accessed journal articles through direct subscription to a journal, often via professional association membership, or

Corresponding author: Annika Marlen Sabine Hinze *is associate professor of political science at Fordham University. She can be reached at ahinze1@fordham.edu.*
Daniel Stockemer *is professor of political science at the University of Ottawa. He can be reached at daniel.stockemer@uottawa.ca.*
Theresa Reidy *is professor of government and politics at University College Cork. She can be reached at T.Reidy@ucc.ie.*

© The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of American Political Science Association.
doi:10.1017/S1049096525101145

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096525101145 Published online by Cambridge University Press

through university libraries that paid the journal subscription fees. Outside of universities and research institutions, anyone who wanted to access a journal article or issue had to pay a (usually substantial) fee.

...we present a predation index in political science based on a clear operational definition and coding, thereby providing a tool that every scholar can use to protect the integrity of the publishing process and their own work.

The open-access movement, which emerged about 25 years ago, changed the funding model. The movement's premise is that research produced at publicly funded institutions and through taxpayer-funded research programs is a public good and should be available free at the point of use and not maintained behind expensive paywalls. Essentially, no one should have to pay twice to read a research article. The combination of the increasing fees charged by publishers for journals and the pressure on funding in higher education worked in tandem to accelerate support for open-access publishing. A new financial model emerged (Plan S 2021) and "pay to publish" started to replace "pay to read." Article processing charges (APCs) have begun to gradually replace subscription fees for journals.

The transition to the pay-to-publish model led to the emergence of new journals across all disciplines. The open-access movement brought the publication world closer to the ideal of establishing a creative commons for proliferating global scientific knowledge. However, at the same time, a new, more dishonest type of journal emerged that was motivated by the triple benefit of ever-increasing pressure to publish among academics, growth in direct payments to publishers for each article, and a substantial decrease in the costs of delivering the publishing model. Predatory journals became an unintended by-product of open access. Because they do not adhere to best publishing practices, such journals are a "global threat" (Grudniewicz et al. 2019). Patwardhan (2019) described them as characterized by low quality, purely for profit, with no rigorous peer review. Flaws, misrepresentations, and outright fraud also make their way onto the printed page. Because those articles are published as open access without a paywall, the majority of those who do not have the scientific literacy skills to identify the flaws can easily access them.[2]

Despite the perils, scholars continue to submit manuscripts to predatory journals. The reasons are rooted in the demand and supply of the publishing process. On the supply side, the experience of writing and submitting journal manuscripts can be dispiriting. Scholars often experience slow publication cycles and low acceptance rates. In addition, structural barriers are omnipresent in the publishing world, including language skills but also access to research funds, equipment, and networks. All of these barriers impede access to major publication outlets, particularly for traditionally marginalized groups in academia such as people of color and women (Koivu and Hinze 2017). On the demand side, the pressure to accumulate long lists of publications is intense. Especially for anxious early-career scholars seeking tenure or promotion, predatory journals may provide an unwitting solution (Mills and Inouye 2021). In many instances, the promise of quick publication and misleading information on journal websites lure scholars into predatory publishing (Bagues, Sylos-Labini, and Zinovyeva 2019; Stockemer and Reidy 2024). However, not all academics who publish in predatory journals are gullible victims who have been duped or ensnared. Some might consciously choose to publish in a journal with lower-quality criteria—especially after previous negative experiences with traditional academic journals including rejection, slow publication turnaround times, and issues of English-language proficiency (Mills and Inouye 2021).[3]

All of these factors make junior scholars more vulnerable to predatory journals, especially graduate students and early-career academics (Mathew, Patel, and Low 2022) but also scholars from lower-resourced academic backgrounds, particularly in the Global South (Xia et al. 2015). Those scholars who face pressure to publish but do not have access to proper mentorship or are generally inexperienced (Laine et al. 2025) are particularly vulnerable prey for predatory journals. In other words, there is no one single factor that leads scholars to publish in predatory journals but rather a combination of factors ranging from job-market pressures and lack of resources to inexperience and simple frustration.

...there is no one single factor that leads scholars to publish in predatory journals but rather a combination of factors ranging from job-market pressures and lack of resources to inexperience and simple frustration.

Predatory journals are aggressive in their advertising tactics, often promising a turnaround time of a few weeks. This type of timeline makes it virtually impossible to ensure a double-blind peer-review process; however, it is highly attractive to junior scholars who are expected to have a high research output in a relatively short period. The peer-review process of articles for traditional journals takes months, and reviewer fatigue since the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the length of the process for many journals and editors (Petrescu and Krishen 2022). However, it is not only early-career scholars who must develop their publishing literacy. Many senior scholars also need support in their role of evaluating grant submissions, job and tenure applications, and award presentations. Furthermore, in conducting literature searches for research and teaching, all scholars are likely to encounter poor-quality predatory materials. Increased use of AI tools will only amplify this challenge. Across the social sciences, there is a structural need to build awareness about the complexities of the publishing environment.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096525101145 Published online by Cambridge University Press

PREDATORY LISTS

Identifying the "best" journals in most disciplines is relatively straightforward. Most scholars easily identify important outlets in their area of specialization through a combination of impact factors, track records of publishing important research, connection with significant disciplinary figures, subdiscipline relevance, and general prestige. To a lesser degree, the same applies to middle-tier journals that often may have a regional or national focus. However, at the lowest level, there is a proliferation of publications that most people do not know: the so-called predatory journals. Unfortunately, identifying them is not straightforward and therein lies the challenge that this study seeks to address. Several important efforts have established lists of potential predatory publishing houses and predatory journals. "Beall's List" was the first and most important of these, in operation from 2010 to 2017 (Beall 2016). The list focused on quality standards in publishing and, when it closed, almost 1,000 publishers were included. In 2019, Vakil estimated that there were approximately 10,000 predatory journals, with likely hundreds in political science publishing thousands of articles. *The Economist* (2020) reported that there were 13,000 predatory journals in 2020. Cabell's Scholarly Analytics listed 17,000 journals by the end of 2024. The growth rate for predatory journals is immense. Some subdisciplines (e.g., STEM) have created their own lists to establish strategies for identifying predatory operators (Clark 2015; Eriksson and Helgesson 2017).

The main problem with these predatory lists is their stasis. As scholars become more aware of the existence of predatory journals and these journals become the topic of publications, conference panels, and informal discussions among academics, predatory publishers adjust their methods or simply change the name of their journals to evade detection. Journals also evolve: they are bought and sold and their positioning may develop over time. Legal actions also have been used to deter scholars who have sought to establish publicly available resources. A predation index, conversely, is dynamic precisely because it does not focus on a set list of publications and it has the ability—based on user feedback—to evolve and adjust over time. It therefore can be a useful instrument to support authors in their decision making.

Creating a definitive tool to identify predatory journals is a complex challenge, even more so considering that they have made it onto white lists (i.e., lists of preapproved entities or resources deemed safe or acceptable) such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Scopus.[4] Individual lists are not infallible; can become quickly outdated; and on their own do not fully protect scholars, which underscores the two objectives of this article: (1) to increase publishing literacy; and (2) to create a tool to identify such predatory journals.

METHODOLOGY

Our goal was to identify predatory journals and create a tool that would allow political scientists to do so. To achieve this, we first consulted the 20 most-cited articles on operationalizing predation across fields using the Scinapse website (www.Scinapse.io), which ranks articles based on their h-index (i.e., a metric used to assess the impact and productivity of a researcher's published work). We then extracted the criteria they used in their respective predation indexes. From this exhaustive list, which included more than 25 criteria, we filtered those criteria into our own predation index. Three guidelines helped us to construct it: (1) scholars must be able to apply the indicators for predation before the submission of an article; (2) all indicators must be clearly identifiable on a journal's website; and (3) users of our predation tool should be able to determine whether a journal is predatory in less than 20 minutes.

The rigorous application of these three criteria reduced our list to 16 indicators. We then organized these criteria under broader categories, including "editor and staff," "business management," "integrity," and "general." We reviewed these criteria again, tightened the categories, deleted repetition, and made all categories mutually exclusive. We conducted this task by running our indicators against highly ranked journals in political science to determine whether they were appropriate for our purposes. We also included only clear criteria for predation. For example, we excluded measures for geographical diversity and gender balance. Although these measures pinpoint inequalities in a discipline, they are not a measure of predation. We also did not include criteria regarding the peer-review process or the quality of the copyediting process because they are difficult for authors to evaluate at the beginning of the submission process. A final factor in our selection process was how quickly each single criterion could be identified. Ultimately, we narrowed our scale to 10 indicators and three categories: (1) editor and staff, (2) business management, and (3) general. We believe that users can code each criterion within 2 to 3 minutes. For each indicator, we suggest dichotomous coding. Due to the influential nature of Beall's List, more than half of the journal articles we examined for their operationalization on predation used its criteria.

Category: Editor and Staff

1. The publisher is the editor OR the editor is not a discipline/subject expert OR there is no editor listed.
2. There is no editorial board or partial/fake editorial board. Users of the predation index can verify this criterion by checking whether the editorial board members are found easily on their respective university website and whether they can be considered an expert in their field (i.e., through verification of their publications). Another easily identifiable question that users could ask is: Do the listed editorial board members have actual university email addresses (instead of Hotmail or Gmail accounts)? Prominent scholars may be listed on editorial boards of predatory journals without their knowledge; therefore, as a last resort, researchers may consider contacting them directly to inquire about the journal whose editorial board on which they are listed as a member.

Category: Business Management

3. There is no clear information on content conservation. Does the journal's website have a log of older issues and volumes? Can these be accessed by researchers? Is the journal's publishing history and peer-review status readily available? Is the journal accessible through major databases?
4. The option to prepay APCs for future articles is offered AND/OR the amount of the APC is not listed or unclear.
5. The publisher displays prominent statements that promise rapid publication and/or unusually quick peer review (i.e., less than four weeks). A turnaround time that is too short implies that the time frame allocated for peer review is unrealistic for

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096525101145 Published online by Cambridge University Press

implementing a robust process or that there may be no peer review at all.
6. The journal provides no information about publication ethics.

Category: General

7. The journal contains fake information or uses boastful language about its impact factor, location, and press. To verify a journal's impact factor, users can check reputable websites (e.g., Scopus and Web of Science). Discrepancies between a journal's claims about its impact factor and a reputable website should raise suspicion.
8. The journal publishes across different disjointed, unrelated fields AND/OR articles with no connection to its mission (e.g., a political science journal that publishes on medical topics should raise suspicion).
9. The English quality of the website AND/OR articles is poor.
10. The journal does not use identifiers (e.g., DOI and ISSN) or uses incorrect identifiers (e.g., DOIs).

To make the application of the predation index user friendly, we created an easily accessible tool on the International Political Science Association website. We invite scholars to use this tool to evaluate the predatory nature of any journal (www.ipsa.org/publications/predatory-publishing).

APPLYING AND VALIDATING THE PREDATION INDEX

The 10-item predation index is applicable to any journal simply by checking the journal's website and assigning either a 1 (criterion applies) or a 0 (criterion does not apply). The result would allow researchers to categorize the journal on a sliding scale of scores

Table 1

Applying the Predation Index to Five Journals from Beall's List

	Category A: Editor and Staff								
	Publisher is the editor OR editor is not a discipline/ subject expert OR no editor listed			No editorial board OR partial/fake editorial board			Total		
Reviewers	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3
IROSS	1	1	1	1	1	1	**2**	**2**	**2**
Novelty Journals	1	1	1	1	0	0	**2**	**1**	**1**
American Research Institute for Policy Development	0	1	1	0	1	1	**0**	**2**	**2**
Research Publish Journals	1	1	1	1	1	0	**2**	**2**	**1**
Asian Economic and Social Society	0	1	1	0	1	0	**0**	**2**	**1**

	Category B: Business Management														
	No clear information on content conservation			Option to prepay APCs for future articles AND/OR amount of the APC is not listed or unclear			Publisher displays prominent statements that promise rapid publication AND/OR unusually quick peer review (less than four weeks)			Journal provides no information about publication ethics			Total		
Reviewers	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3
IROSS	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	**3**	**2**	**3**
Novelty Journals	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	**3**	**2**	**3**
American Research Institute for Policy Development	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	**3**	**1**	**2**
Research Publish Journals	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	**3**	**3**	**3**
Asian Economic and Social Society	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	**3**	**3**	**3**

	Category C: General														
	Journal contains fake information AND/OR uses boastful language about impact factor, location, and press			Journal publishes across different disjointed and unrelated fields AND/OR articles without any connection to its mission			Poor English quality of the website AND/OR the published articles			Journal does not use identifiers (DOI, ISSN) OR uses incorrect or fake DOIs			Total		
Reviewers	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3	R1	R2	R3
IROSS	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	**1**	**3**	**2**
Novelty Journals	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	**3**	**3**	**3**
American Research Institute for Policy Development	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	**3**	**2**	**3**
Research Publish Journals	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	**4**	**3**	**3**
Asian Economic and Social Society	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	**0**	**3**	**3**

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096525101145 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Table 2

Overall Score of Beall's List Journals

	Total Scores			
	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 3	Mean/Median Score
IROSS	6	7	7	**6–7**
Novelty Journals	8	6	7	**7**
American Research Institute for Policy Development	6	5	7	**5–7**
Research Publish Journals	9	8	7	**7**
Asian Economic and Social Society	0	8	7	**7–8**

from 0 (high-quality academic journal) to 1–3 (a legitimate academic journal) to 4–6 (a journal with some predatory qualities) to 7–10 (a clearly predatory journal).

We tested and validated our predation index using a two-step process. First, all three coauthors independently applied the index to 10 journals: five journals were randomly selected by a number drawn from among the top 20 highly political science journals as ranked by Scinapse (i.e., *British Journal of Political Science*, *West European Politics*, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *Political Psychology*, and *New Political Economy*). Five additional journals were selected among the predatory journals on Beall's List that included "social science," "politics," or "policy" in their names: *International Research Organization of Sciences and Social Sciences* (*IROSSS*), *Novelty Journals*/*Social Science Journals*, *American Research Institute for Policy Development*, *Research Publish Journals*/*Social Science Journals*, *and Asian Economic and Social Society*. All three coders used the same journals and coded them based on the 10 criteria in our predation index.

Table 1 displays the coding by the three individual coauthors in each category for the predatory journals. All non-predatory journals scored a 0 in all categories by all three coauthors. A 0 denotes that the category is not applicable and a 1 denotes that the category applies. Although there were slight variations, the three reviewers found at least some indicators of predation in all three journals. Table 2 lists the total score in each category for each predatory journal. Of 10 categories, each coauthor scored the sample journals from Beall's List positive (1) on our predation index in at least five of our 10 categories—and often more. There was variation within

Table 3

Applying the Predation Index to Three Journals from the DOAJ

	Category A: Editor and Staff								
	Publisher is the editor OR editor is not a discipline/subject expert OR no editor listed			No editorial board OR partial/fake editorial board			Total		
Reviewers	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**
Italian Political Science	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**0**	**0**
Brazilian Political Science Review	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**0**	**0**
Romanian Review of Political Science and International Relations	0	1	0	0	0	0	**0**	**1**	**0**

	Category B: Business Management														
	No clear information on content conservation			Option to prepay APCs for future articles AND/OR amount of the APC is not listed or unclear			Publisher displays prominent statements that promise rapid publication AND/OR unusually quick peer review (less than four weeks)			Journal provides no information about publication ethics			Total		
Reviewers	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**
Italian Political Science	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	**0**	**2**	**0**
Brazilian Political Science Review	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**0**	**0**
Romanian Review of Political Science and International Relations	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	**0**	**3**	**0**

	Category C: General														
	Journal contains fake information AND/OR uses boastful language about impact factor, location, and press			Journal publishes across different disjointed and unrelated fields AND/OR articles without any connection to its mission			Poor English quality of the website AND/OR the published articles			Journal does not use identifiers (DOI, ISSN) OR uses incorrect or fake DOIs			Total		
Reviewers	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**	**R4**	**R5**	**R6**
Italian Political Science	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**0**	**0**
Brazilian Political Science Review	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	**0**	**0**
Romanian Review of Political Science and International Relations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	**0**	**2**	**0**

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096525101145 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the different categories coded. In discussion after the coding process was finished, all three coauthors identified the lack of transparent layout and/or organization of the Beall's List journals as the main reason for the coding discrepancies. It was not fully possible to identify all of the relevant information on the websites of the five journals identified as predatory by Beall's List. If this happens to users of our predation index, we suggest coding non-identifiable information as predatory, considering that any legitimate journal would have a self-interest to be as transparent as possible.

Given the differences among the three coders for our random selection of social science journals on Beall's List, we decided to apply an additional test to our predation tool. We applied it to journals outside of Beall's List and outside of the top journals in the discipline. Thus, we randomly selected three additional journals from the DOAJ. To obtain a different and unbiased assessment, we approached three colleagues—all of whom were trained political scientists who were not involved in the project—and asked them to code these journals using our tool. The purpose of this additional test was to ensure intercoder reliability. We told them only that the journals were randomly selected for a research project and that the selection was not meant to imply that they were predatory. Table 3 presents the calculations of these three political scientists (i.e., R4, R5, and R6) who had no additional information about our research.

As the coding in tables 3 and 4 reveals, the three journals sampled from the DOAJ were broadly categorized as non-predatory by reviewers 4, 5, and 6. However, reviewer 5 did observe minor issues with two of the three journals selected for our analysis. Based on the overall coding of all three coders, we coded these journals as non-predatory. However, it also is important to note that our tool is malleable to individual differences, perceptions, and benchmarks. That is, the predation index is sensitive to the individual benchmarks of its users. For example, if reviewer 5 had a stricter interpretation of the criteria than reviewers 4 and 6, their benchmark for predation consequently might be somewhat higher.

Table 4.

Overall Score of DOAJ

	Reviewer 4	Reviewer 5	Reviewer 6	Mean/Median Score
Italian Political Science	0	2	0	**0.6/0**
Brazilian Political Science Review	0	0	0	**0**
Romanian Journal of Political Science and International Relations	0	6	0	**2/0**

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

More than scholars in many disciplines, political scientists have identified the perils of widespread dissemination of disinformation and misinformation (Tucker et al. 2018). However, so far they have not created any universally applicable tool to identify predatory publishing; we developed and tested such a tool. No tool is perfect, of course, and even a well-tested tool cannot account for the different approaches that coders may take, their different perceptions of journals, and how they may navigate journal websites. Therefore, even with our tool—which was used independently by six political scientists to ensure intercoder reliability—there are gray areas in how academic journals are presented and organized, as well as how they navigate the publishing process. These findings were to be expected—even necessary.

The results from using our research tool for assessing journals suggest that identifying predatory journals is not a straightforward process (Habibie and Fazel 2024). Therefore, we recommend not identifying predation simply by answering "yes" to all of the items in our different categories. Rather, if a journal scores more than 5 points—that is, more than five items (i.e., more than half of the total) from our tool are applicable—it is more likely to be predatory in nature. If a journal scores more than 7 points, indicating that more than seven items from our tool are applicable, the likelihood of predation becomes very high.

In a crowded academic market, in which junior scholars in particular are under tremendous pressure to "publish or perish," we hope that our tool can be of use to them for identifying predatory journals and carefully choosing outlets for their research. The predation index also could help scholars to identify predatory journals to avoid citing articles that may not have undergone a rigorous peer-review process. It may be valuable in teaching and, ultimately, an important tool to assist in service work and major decisions about research grants, awards, and promotions. Our analysis shows that scoring the individual categories is somewhat subjective; results may vary depending on the coder. Therefore, we recommend a sliding scale for identifying possible predation and a careful, well-researched interpretation of any results. We acknowledge that our tool must be honed over time as more researchers use it. A larger group of users may better identify gaps in our framework or changes in the publishing market, which will happen over time. Therefore, it is our hope that this tool will be used dynamically and that feedback from the scholarly community will help us to adjust it over time.

...it is our hope that this tool will be used dynamically and that feedback from the scholarly community will help us to adjust it over time.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit http://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096525101145.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the three anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments, which significantly improved our article. We also are

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096525101145 Published online by Cambridge University Press

deeply grateful to our three colleagues—Ida Bastiaens, Gregory Holyk, and Sarah Lockhart—who served as additional coders to ensure intercoder reliability.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this analysis. ■

NOTES

1. Professional entities in the publication industry also are turning their attention to tools to detect predatory publishers (see https://thinkchecksubmit.org/books-and-chapters).
2. "Fake" science and its perils came to prominent global attention during the COVID-19 pandemic when Scheirer (2020, 175) described predatory journals as providing "anyone with the ability to pay, the opportunity to publish pseudoscience, that can be amplified by mainstream news sources" (see also Linacre, Rhode, and Berryman 2024; Rebeaud et al. 2022).
3. These researchers typically are younger, are more prolific but have fewer publications in high-impact journals, and tend to be based in a department with lower research quality (Bagues, Sylos-Labini, and Zinovyeva 2019). A substantial percentage of the scholars who publish in predatory journals also are based in the Global South (Xia et al. 2015). For instance, South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil, Russia, and China account for a substantial percentage of the articles in predatory journals (Mills and Inouye 2021).
4. For example, as early as 2013, Bohannon (2013) found in a cross-referencing exercise for *Science* that "one in five of Beall's 'predatory' publishers had managed to get at least one of their journals into the DOAJ" (Bagues, Sylos-Labini, and Zinovyeva 2019; Baker 2016).

REFERENCES

Baker, Monya. 2016. "Open-Access Index Delists Thousands of Journals." *Nature* 10. DOI:10.1038/nature.2016.19871.

Bagues, Manuel, Mauro Sylos-Labini, and Natalia Zinovyeva. 2019. "A Walk on the Wild Side: 'Predatory' Journals and Information Asymmetries in Scientific Evaluations." *Research Policy* 48 (2): 462–77.

Beall, Jeffrey. 2016. "Best Practices for Scholarly Authors in the Age of Predatory Journals." *Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons of England* 98 (2): 77–79.

Beall, Jeffrey. 2017. "What I Learned from Predatory Publishers." *Biochemia Medica* 27 (2): 273–78.

Beall, Jeffery, and James M. DuBois. 2016. "Scholars Beware: Predatory Publishers Are Increasingly Targeting Psychologists and Other Social Scientists." *Monitor on Psychology* 47 (4): 42.

Bohannon, John. 2013. "Who's Afraid of Peer Review?" *Science* 342 (6154): 60–65.

Cabells Scholarly Analytics. 2024. https://blog.cabells.com/cabells-scholarly-analytics.

Clark, Jocalyn. 2015. "How to Avoid Predatory Journals—A Five-Point Plan." *British Medical Journal Opinion*, January 19. https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2015/01/19/jocalyn-clark-how-to-avoid-predatory-journals-a-five-point-plan.

Eriksson, Stefan, and Gert Helgesson. 2017. "The False Academy: Predatory Publishing in Science and Bioethics." *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 20:163–70.

Grudniewicz, Agnes, David Moher, Kelly D. Cobey, Gregory I. Bryson, Samantha Cukier, Kristiann Allen, Clare Ardern, Lesley Balcom, Tiago Barros, Monica Berger, Jairo B. Ciro, et al. 2019. "Predatory Journals: No Definition, No Defence." *Nature* 576 (7786): 210–12.

Habibie, Pejman, and Ismaiel Fazel. 2024. "New Knowledge Economy and Predatory Practices." In *Predatory Scholarly Publishing and Knowledge Sharing*, ed. Pejman Habibie and Ismaiel Fazel, 1–15. New York and London: Routledge.

International Political Science Association World Congress. 2025. "Resisting Autocratization in Polarized Societies." Seoul, South Korea, July 12-16.

Koivu, Kendra L., and Annika Marlen Hinze. 2017. "Cases of Convenience? The Divergence of Theory from Practice in Case Selection in Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50 (4): 1023–27.

Laine, Christine, Dianne Babski, Vivienne C. Bachelet, Till W. Bärninghausen, Christopher Baethge, Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, Frank Frizelle, et al. 2025. "Predatory Journals: What Can We Do to Protect Their Prey?" *New England Journal of Medicine* 392 (3): 283–85.

Linacre, Simon, Sneha K. Rhode, and Kathleen Berryman. 2024. "Hidden Dangers: COVID-19–Based Research in Predatory Journals." *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 55 (2): 165–86.

Mathew, Rishi Philip, Vimal Patel, and Gavin Low. 2022. "Predatory Journals: The Power of the Predator Versus the Integrity of the Honest." *Current Problems in Diagnostic Radiology* 51 (5): 740–46.

Mills, David K., and Kelsey Inouye. 2021. "Problematizing 'Predatory Publishing': A Systematic Review of Factors Shaping Publishing Motives, Decisions, and Experiences." *Learned Publishing* 34 (2): 89–104.

Patwardhan, Bhushan. 2019. "Why India Is Striking Back Against Predatory Journals." *Nature* 571 (7763): 7–8.

Petrescu, Maria, and Anjala S. Krishen. 2022. "The Evolving Crisis of the Peer-Review Process." *Journal of Marketing Analytics* 10:185–86.

Plan S. 2021. "The Plan S Principles." www.coalition-s.org/plan_s_principles.

Rebeaud, Mathieu E., Florian Cova, Valentin Ruggeri, and Michaël Rochoy. 2022. "Raising Public Awareness About the Misuse of Predatory Journals: One Year After the 'Hydroxychloroquine and Push-Scooters Accidents' Hoax." *Therapie* 77 (3): 373–75.

Scheirer, Walter. 2020. "A Pandemic of Bad Science." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 76 (4): 175–84.

Stockemer, Daniel, and Theresa Reidy. 2024. "Academic Misconduct, Fake Authorship Letters, Cyber Fraud: Evidence from the *International Political Science Review*." *Learned Publishing* 37 (1): 39–43.

The Economist. 2020. "How to Spot Dodgy Academic Journals." www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/05/30/how-to-spot-dodgy-academic-journals.

Tucker, Joshua A., Andrew Guess, Pablo Barberá, Cristian Vaccari, Alexandra Siegel, Sergey Sanovich, Denis Stukal, and Brendan Nyhan. 2018. "Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation: A Review of the Scientific Literature." *Social Science Research Network*, March 19. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3144139.

Vakil, Cathy. 2019. "Predatory Journals: Authors and Readers Beware." *Canadian Family Physician* 65 (2): 92–94.

Xia, Jingfeng, Jennifer L. Harmon, Kevin G. Connolly, Ryan M. Donnelly, Mary R. Anderson, and Heather A. Howard. 2015. "Who Publishes in 'Predatory' Journals?" *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 66 (7): 1406–17.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096525101145 Published online by Cambridge University Press