

“Predatory Publications” in the Era of Internet and Technology: A Rejoinder

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“Predatory publications in the era of internet and technology: Open access publications are at risk” was published in the *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications* and Prof. Papanikos has given his insightful inputs on it in the article entitled “Predatory Publications in the Era of Internet and Technology: A Comment”. As a response to his article, the authors identified that the “Predatory Practices” go beyond the “Predatory publications” and are prevalent in many formats other than scientific publications. Although naming such practices as “Academic pornography” is too harsh, no other word could be used for such biased conspiracy in the name of so called quality and predatory publications. No one is authorized to judge that this particular publication model is good and others are bad. We wanted to communicate that predatory vs. non-predatory debate is pulling back the novel idea of open access. We are at the same track with Prof. Papanikos, the ways are different.

Keywords: predatory journals, open access, predatory practices, predatory conferences

Introduction

Papanikos (2022a) provided his valuable comments in our article (Kumar et al. 2022), published in the *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications*. This is a first response to the article of Prof. Papanikos. The “Comment” of Prof. Papanikos, including other cited works, we found, are precious for researchers who are working in this debate, however, all these papers, particularly those written by Prof. Papanikos, are very insightful and unfortunately, we did not come across these articles prior to writing the article “Predatory Publications in the era of internet and Technology: Open access publications are at risk”. If we were gone through those other articles written on “Predatory Practices”, our arguments were stronger with great scientific evidences. We, the authors of the paper feel privileged and obliged to Prof. Papanikos for such eye-opening, thought-provoking articles on the issue of predatory academic practices. Responding to the comments of Prof. Papanikos needs more and more depth study on the issue but we have made efforts to prepare a preliminary response to it. More responses will follow.

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First of all we would like to make it clear that "Predatory publications in the era of internet and technology: Open access publications are at risk" written by Akhilesh Kumar, Ravi Gupta, Krishna Kant Tripathi & Rajani Ranjan Singh was, as the title of the paper reflects, particularly intended to the concern that how deliberately open access journals are victimized by associating and popularizing it with the word "Predatory" thus the discussion has been made around the open access journals only and other predatory practices like predatory conferences, predatory publication and other such issues were not taken in to account in the referred paper, however, predatory practices other than predatory journals are also very common. Prof. Papanikos has mentioned, "I disagree with the link they make between open access and peer-review. I guess the authors mean blind peer-review as being more credible. My article on predatory publishing has been uploaded without any peer review. Their paper has been uploaded after a peer review. Both are open access but they differ in their peer-review. Does this say anything about the quality of the two papers?" (Papanikos, 2022a).

Here we would present our lookout about the issue. Prof. Papanikos has pointed out correctly that in the context of the article "Predatory publications in the era of internet and technologies: Open access publications are at risk" we used the term "peer-review" for the traditional notion of blinded peer-review. It is beyond the scope of the present article to discuss the quality and credibility of blind peer review process but blind peer review also, doesn't guarantee the quality of a scientific article, what usually claimed as a "quality" by subscription based or open access journals but what are the alternatives? Furthermore, we wish to ask how many authors have opportunity to get published without a peer review? Being an editor (and a reformer too) one has the freedom to do it but most of the authors do not have such opportunity as they are bonded (sometimes blinded and bended also) with the criteria of journals either it is desk acceptance-peer review-revision-publication model or desk-acceptance-publication-review and reader's feedback-revision-final publication model or a hybrid revolutionary model adopted by ATINER's journals combining features of traditional peer-review and modern post publication peer-review model. In most of (not all) the journals authors are like 'dancing peacocks' upon indication of editors and the Author's Guidelines. Being an editor and a great scholar, you can do it, an author cannot. The best example of it is that this response too, has to be dependent for editor's decision prior to be uploaded and published! Being an editor, if you don't like our arguments, you have authority to say "the article is not up to mark" "the article possesses weak arguments", "the article is not within the scope of this journal" and many such other options an editor has, which are not available to authors. It is quite interesting here to share the experience that the article "Predatory publications in the era of internet and technologies: Open access publications are at risk" was submitted to a so-called reputed journal for publication. It was sent for blind peer review and we received the comment of reviewer that as we did not take a working definition of predatory journals in entire article, thus, its fuzzy and not acceptable, however, Prof. Papanikos found that ".....The authors then proceed by presenting 10 studies which in one way or another classify predatory journals as the ones which charge a fee, are not peer-reviewed and provide poor editing

services. Further, Papanikos (2022a) mentioned “Then the authors discuss a disreputable case of a librarian who developed a black list. Reputable academics develop only white lists” (Papanikos, 2022a).

Hats off Professor for these lines which are the summary of entire discussion on “Predatory Journals and Publications”. We totally agree and support this view. Reputable academics always develop white-list, but the academic world weird around the notion of “Predatory” introduced by a librarian and the impact is so intense that many journals are flooded with such articles. As observed by researchers, the dialogue on predatory practices was so swift, that within a short span of time, until 2021, about 600 papers had been written on the subject (Krawczyk and Kulczycki, 2021), and many countries made policy as well as list of referenced journals for scientific publications. We all view it a game of market to sell the scientific knowledge by few publication houses and academic world is under trap of those publication houses. Not only the publication houses but also several software companies have vested interest in it. Software companies are earning by selling plagiarism software, paraphrasing software and so on.

The paper “Predatory publications in the era of internet and technology: Open access publications are at risk” written by us has been intended to discuss how either intentionally or unintentionally, few librarians and countries as well as big publishers are trying to defame “open access” in order to continue their monopoly in the business of scientific publications and to continue with their traditional business model of scientific publications. Authors of the article were not intended to define any such “predatory journals” rather, authors too, agree with the view that no person should be authorized to categorize journals as predatory or non-predatory. The article written by Prof. Papanikos presents the crux of entire discussion in a single line that “true academicians develop only white list” (Papanikos, 2022a). However, here we argue that the existence of white list, confirms the existence of black list also similar to the concept that the existence of day time confirms the existence of night and darkness. We think Prof. Papanikos has also believed that the real predatory practice is the subscription-based model when he mentions, “Predatory fees included mainly journal subscription fees and some submission fees. The big money was made by the subscriptions of the university and other libraries following the common microeconomic policy of price discrimination” (Papanikos, 2022d).

As we too mentioned, “It is beyond our understanding that promoting open access may lead to corruption in publication, but promoting subscription-based traditional publication might not lead to any corruption in publication, as if the subscription model is the only model of and guarantee of quality scientific publication (Kumar et al., 2022).

As noted by Papanikos (2022a), “The authors (Kumar et al., 2022) then proceed by presenting 10 studies which in one way or another classify —predatory journals as the ones which charge a fee, are not peer- reviewed and provide poor editing services. All the authors aim at defining what they call the —core features of a predatory journal and distinguish it from what they call a —legitimate journal”.

We would like to mention that authors did not make efforts to define either predatory or non-predatory journals, rather, authors presented how the use of the term "predatory journals and publications" have been used in contemporary literature. Ten such studies were presented to know how the biased criteria have been used by supporters of subscription-based publishing to defame independent, small scale, local publishers (particularly open access publishers) and to keep them aside from the business of publication. The following excerpt from the article will make it clearer: "The quality of a journal could not be judged based on the model it has adopted as either pay & publish or pay & access. If pay & publish is enough to suspect a journal for being predatory, then most of the scientific publishers are predatory up to a certain extent (Kumar et al., 2022)." Similar was noted by Krawczyk and Kulczycki (2021), when they mentions: "Many scholars have criticized Beall and his approach. Specifically, he was accused of a heavy bias against (Open Access) OA movement, an unclear methodology for developing his lists, and blindness to the flaws of publishers using a subscription model." Further, Prof. Papanikos remarks that "From an economists' point of view, such practices have no future because there will be no market for them. In a free market nobody is cheated, especially in the long-term."

It is apposite to mention here that from the scientific point of view also such practices have no future in long run but what about those pseudo-academicians who get some key positions at policy level on the basis of number of publications and not on the basis of quality of their scientific novelty and original work? There should be some indicators of the quality.

Prof. Papanikos mentions "Academic 'pornography' includes all websites whose aim is to defame other academic's works by developing black lists. Academics who visit these websites are reading academic 'pornography'" (Papanikos, 2022d). Here, we believe that the word "Pornography" in this present context is too retaliatory word but on the other hand we did not find other suitable word to replace or substitute it. Many times, academicians are not visiting such websites of black-list rather, they are forced to do so as per the applicable laws. Also, a person visiting either real pornographic sites or in present context, academic pornographic sites, is not necessarily an addict, rather, he/she might be a researcher and visiting such websites for the purpose of data collection! Elsewhere, Papanikos (2022a) mentioned about several so called "Academic pornographic sites", "Pornographic academics" and many more and we are strongly agreeing with that. We would like to add here that the existence of pornographic academicians, pornographic academic sites confirm the existence of "pornographic academic editors" too, which we think, should also need to be discussed.

Author has mentioned that "... a good-quality journal depends on the number of people who read and nothing else" (Papanikos, 2022a). But a report published on the 9th of December 2013 in "The Guardian" titled "Nobel winner declares boycott of top science journals" is sufficient to shed light on the issue. He argued that a paper could become highly cited (impact factor is based on citations received by articles published in journals) because it is good science or because it

is eye-catching, provocative, or wrong (Schekman, 2013) hence rejecting the criteria of goodness of badness of a publication based on citation it receives.

A democratic world have a bright future but it needs educated citizens, or better citizens with pedagogy (Papanikos, 2022b) and likewise, the scientific community and the science has also a bright future in today's democratic world and it requires educated and aware researchers about the oligopolies of publication industry, conflict of interest of the market and the economics of the business of publishing. In addition, the lack of "Isegoria" (Papanikos, 2022c) while formulating rules and regulations for scientific publications is the root cause of predatory practices in academics.

We conclude here with the observation made by Papanikos (2022a) that "the problem with academic publishing is that a few oligopolies control the industry" (Papanikos, 2022a). The issue of predatory publications and increased debate on it is an issue deliberately popularized in the interest of subscription-based publications, misleading researchers, teachers and policy makers. The academia needs to be united and fight against such list of journals. Also, academia needs to promote "open access journals" no matter whether it has an article processing charges or it is without any article processing charges from authors. Once scientific knowledge will get rid of "Pay to read" model the actual picture will come up. We express sincere thanks to Prof. Papanikos for such an inspiring article promoting dialogue and discussions.

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