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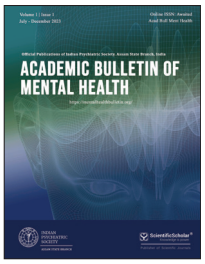


*Editorial*

# Publishing Research: An Author's Dilemma

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Publication of experiments conducted and sharing the results of such scientific research in detail is a keystone for the scientific community. Since the inception of the first journal *Philosophical Transactions,* the conventions of publication of research have undergone massive metamorphosis.[1] In this day and age, publishing research is guided by a standard set of practices and policies, which are aimed at achieving excellence in publication ethics. Organizations like the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) provide supervision in ethics for editors and publishers across all research subjects.[2]

For the individual researcher, publication of research translates to intellectual glory and the recognition of academic talent among peers. It also perks up the chances of securing jobs and promotions along with improving prospects for research support. Notwithstanding these personal advantages, research brings forth new information, expands our understanding of the unknown, and contributes to science for innovation and the betterment of humankind. The world of scientific publication thus provides a pitch where researchers achieve prestige and appreciation in lieu of their contribution to science, apart from financial support.

Publication of research also brings the institution where the research was carried out under the spotlight. The number of publications an individual has to his/her credit is used as a benchmark for annual appraisal by institutions as well as for recruitment. Academicians who are more attentive towards undergraduate and postgraduate teaching may find themselves short of time to invest their energy into research. Consequently, they may miss out on a due promotion and their owed credit may elude them. This could also be a demerit for them in securing grants for original research projects. Thus, the pressure to publish and have many publications to one's credit has only seen an uphill curve, resulting in an increasing number of researches and increasing demand for more journals.

Today, most researchers are caught up in the cycle of publication research, publication, promotion, prestige, and more research money.[3] With more research conducted, a number of journals have mushroomed as well. Approximately 30,000 journals are recorded in the PubMed Journals List itself, which is updated daily, along with plenty more journals that are recorded in other databases.[4] Since institutions are focusing more on publications that an individual has and because the process of publication in reputed journals can be extensive with peer review, multiple unethical practices as well as bogus and cloned journals with attractive publication disclaimers, are flourishing. Authors frequently fall prey to such journals, which are detrimental to the scholarly world.

The escalating number of predatory journals that offer a speedy publication process in exchange for a publication fee, possibly because of the absence of any rigorous peer review process, is alarming.

Early career professionals often fall victim to such journals in an effort to increase the number of publications and boost citations in their curriculum vitae (CV). Predatory journals use an illegitimate open access publication model where authors are bombarded with invitations to publish their work. These journals are not indexed and do not have an impact factor. Their decision to accept a paper is usually conveyed within days, usually with no requests for revision or very minimal revision.[5]

The pressure to publish or perish has also misled many authors to publish in cloned journals. Cloned journals are a replica of legitimate reputed journals that use the same title and same ISSN to attract more articles for publication. They amass more papers for publication as it is quite tricky to identify them from the original and legitimate journals. They are also called "hijacked journals". Cybercriminals continuously steal and develop new web domains to create more cloned journals and target unwary authors, which is known as "web swooping".[6]

Both predatory and cloned journals are posing a jarring threat to the scientific community and stand as a hindrance to the advancement of science. Furthermore, authors are in a rat race to shovel out their research for publishing as early as possible in a top journal for fear of rejection if a similar study has been published in a competing journal. The wait for the study to conclude with a credible result that can be translated into practice in the medical world is often made mincemeat of by the author's impatience and greed for more publications. Results are hence published before the entire study is completed, leading to multiple papers being published from the same study, even if the subsequent papers refute the findings of the initial papers. This phenomenon of "salami-slicing" has become rife and has lessened the quality of publications.[7]

But with artificial intelligence (AI) around the corner, the scenario is set for a paradigmatic change. AI has been shown to help researchers in the literature review process, summarize research papers by selecting the most relevant ones, and even construct research abstracts that are as good as the ones produced by humans. Along with this, AI may also be helpful in the detection of data fabrication as well as plagiarism, assist editors in automation of the peer-review process, check manuscripts for completeness and hasten the time to publication.[8] Like every coin has two sides, the use of AI technologies in research could actually lead to increasing yield in the number of publications without really contributing much to science, which brings us to the same dead end of poor-quality publications. It has also brought forward a predicament of ascribing AI as an author when AI and AI-assisted technology is used for preparing a manuscript. However, organizations like COPE and the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) have clearly stated in their latest guidelines that AI cannot be listed as an author as being non-human, it cannot undertake responsibilities, cannot understand conflicts of interest, and, hence, does not fulfill authorship criteria.[9] In addition, COPE stated that authors who use AI during manuscript preparation, image/table generation, or analysis must maintain transparency and declare it in their materials and methods.[10]

The current objective of all authors, as well as members of the academia, is to prevent further corruption of scientific literature. Authors should cross check the authenticity of the journals they consider for publication and remain wary of false claims such as COPE membership, Scopus indexations, etc. Journals can also take on the responsibility of educating novice authors on how to check the credentials of a journal and steer clear of predatory and cloned journals. To preserve the ethics of scientific publishing and the intellectual honesty of the scientific community, academic researchers may undertake research by keeping the three principles of an AI algorithm in mind – intentionality, intelligence, and adaptability.[11] This could help avoid duplication of research and fill in the gaps in knowledge with new and pertinent research. If an article is found to present redundant or plagiarized data or is unethical, it is also the responsibility of the journal editors to retract the article after a diligent check. The retraction notice should mention the reason for the retraction and specify who is retracting the article. Retracted articles should be identifiable by bibliographic databases.[12]

The Academic Bulletin of Mental Health strives to uphold the principles of authorship provided by COPE and ICMJE. Use of AI, if at all, during manuscript preparation needs to be disclosed by the authors, as recommended by the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME). AI and AI-assisted technologies are definitely here to stay but will they reign and revolutionize remains a question, which only time can tell. Regardless, respect for ethics of research and authorship should be an undeniable principle in academic publications.

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