

# What is predatory publishing and how to identify predatory journals: challenges and consequences

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3 August 2023

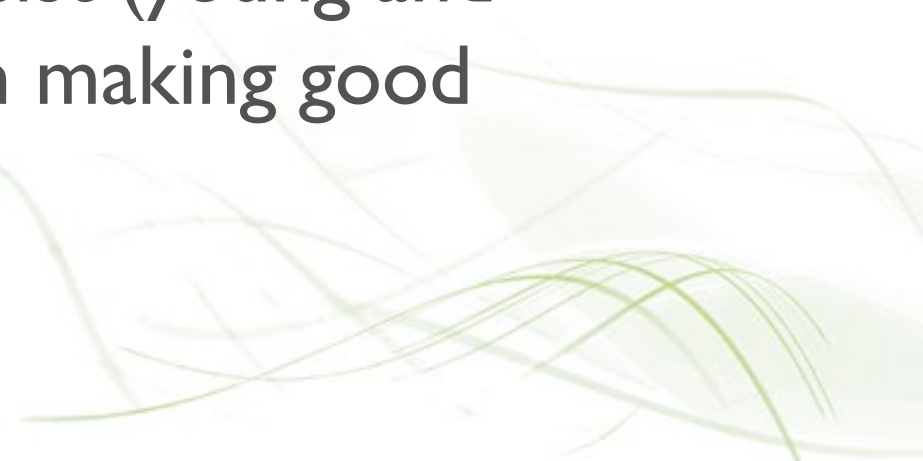


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# The storyline

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- What are predatory journals? The origins and how to identify the markers of such journals.
  - What are the main challenges that the advent of 'predatory' journals have created?
  - What can we do to assist (young and established) scholars in making good publication decisions?
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# Predatory publishing – origins and markers for identification

# A definition: The watchdog – Jeffrey Beall



Predatory journals are OA journals that exist for the sole purpose of profit


- These predators generate profits by charging (excessive) author fees, also known as article processing charges (APCs).
- These journals typically solicit manuscripts by spamming researchers (especially Yahoo and Gmail accounts)
- These journals engage in highly suspicious editorial practices, such as promising very short turn-around, declaring fake information on journal indexing, and so.

<https://scholarlyoa.com/2016/01/05/bealls-list-of-predatory-publishers-2016/>

# The Ottawa declaration

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*"Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritise self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterised 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)*



# Characteristics of predatory journals

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Seeking profit over contribution to scholarship	Characteristics related to article processing fees (APCs) and other sources of income
Misrepresentation of abstracting, indexing and metrics	Characteristics related to inappropriate inclusion in fake databases, indexing in sham services, fake metrics and the manipulation of metrics
Aggressive advertising and solicitation of articles	Characteristics related to indiscriminate and aggressive solicitation of publications, as well as inappropriate advertisements on websites
Inappropriate journal title and scope	Characteristics related to broad, indiscriminate coverage of disciplines
Lack of transparency in governance, editorial and publication practices	Characteristics related to the holding company, publisher, editorial board and editorial staff, as well as misinformation and unprofessional (or lack of) contact e-mail addresses. Characteristics related to article processing time, manuscript submission, publication policies, copyright retention and archiving

# Seeking profit over contribution to scholarship

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Predatory journals are characterised by:

- The deliberate deception of authors by either hiding or not disclosing fees (APC, handling fees, fast-track fees, etc.)
- The omission of any revenue-related information
- The simultaneous launch of a large number of journals, for example, in 2009 OMICS launched 200 journal titles

*"Predatory journals and publishers are entities that **prioritise self-interest at the expense of scholarship** and are characterised 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)*

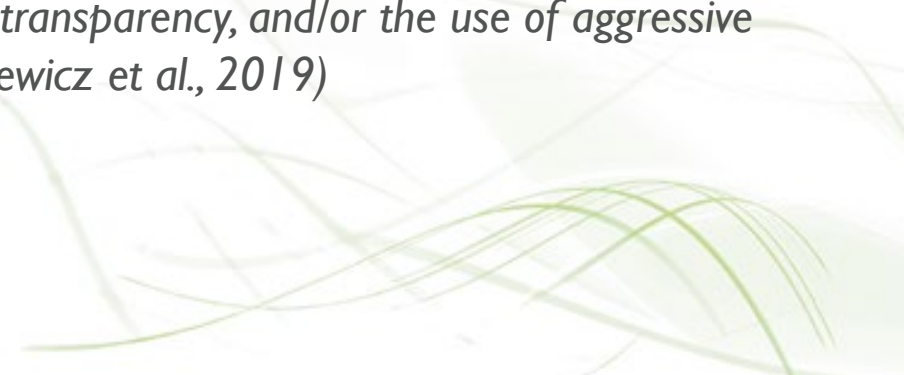
# Misrepresentation of abstracting, indexing and metrics

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Predatory journals are characterised by:

- False claims of indexing in Web of Science and/or Scopus
- Claims of inclusion in databases of companies that provide fake and misleading services
- Claims and listing of fake metrics

*"Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritise self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are **characterised 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)*





So, I Nasim AHmed (CEO of EAS Publisher) would like invite you that Published your Valuable Research work in Our Journal which

### **East African Scholars Multidisciplinary Bulletin**

**Website:** <http://www.easpublisher.com/easmb/>

**Frequency:** Monthly

**ISSN:** 2617-4421 (Print) & 2617-717X (Online)

**Publication Fee:** USD \$25 or INR 1700

**Manuscript Submission:** [easpublisher@gmail.com](mailto:easpublisher@gmail.com)

Note: Please mention the **Journal name** to which manuscript is submitting.

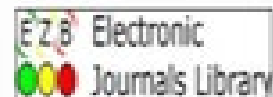
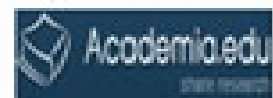
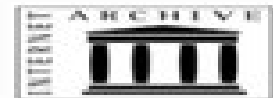
**Immediate acknowledgement, urgent review and publication within 48 Hrs. after payment**

### **Indexing and Abstracting**

Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, Research Bible, World Cat, Eurasian Scientific Journal Index (ESJI) Citefactor, SHERPA/RoMEO, Scientific Indexing Services (SIS), Road-Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources, Directory of Research Journals Indexing (DRJI) and others in Progress

# Examples of fake indexing listed on a predatory journal website

American Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development is stick to explore all publish content worldwide. For this purpose editorial board is planning all papers in following indexing:



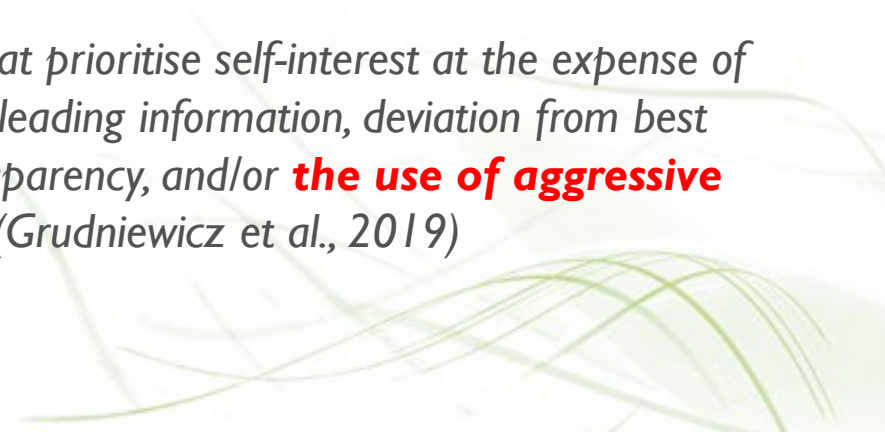
# Aggressive advertising and solicitation of articles

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Call for papers by predatory journals are characterised by:

- Daily indiscriminate e-mails to prospective authors
- Increasingly familiar and flattering language
- The use of business marketing language, for example submit two articles and pay for one

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# Example of spam e-mail

To  
2020-10-16 15:12:25 b

Subject: **Polite Calls for Paper from an International journal**

**Dear Colleague,**

Thank you for cooperation and support. Your kind attention is requested for the following announcement.

Language

**Journal:** Journal of Scientific Research and Reports (<https://tinyurl.com/journal-22d>)

**Frequency:** 15 days

Unknown journal title

**Publication model:** Online as well as Hard copy option

**Discounted Publication Charge:** 75 USD (4575 INR) (Up to the end of this month)

**Original Publication Charge:** 500 USD

Business marketing language

**Ongoing volume:** vol 21

**Transparent and High standard Peer review:** This journal follows highly respected OPEN peer-review system (Example: <https://tinyurl.com/review-22d>).

**Time Schedule:**

Submission to review decision: 10-12 days

Submission to publication: 12-15 days

Inappropriate indexing and metrics

**Indexing:**

NAAS score: 4.44, ProQuest, HINARI (United Nation's Database), EBSCOhost (USA), Google scholar, Ulrich's, CrossRef, Chemical Abstracts Service ("CAS"), CNKI (China), Qualis.

# Flattery

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Example: *First of all we would like to congratulate you for your consistent and incessant efforts till now in the field of ... Being aware of your eminence in the related field, we cordially invite you for your valuable contribution towards our journal (Geoinformatics & Geostatistics)*

‘Predatory conferences’ use even more bombastic phrasing, when calling for speakers; an invitation to the 3rd World Congress on Cell Science & Stem Cell Research includes the following text:

“Dear Dr... Greetings. First of all, our Organization wants to honor you for your achievement and Awards. Your path and experience may guide many young researchers to be a successful scientist in the world. With your majestic presence which will take the conference to a supreme level and also will support to harness the current and future research in Cell Science & Stem Cell Research.”

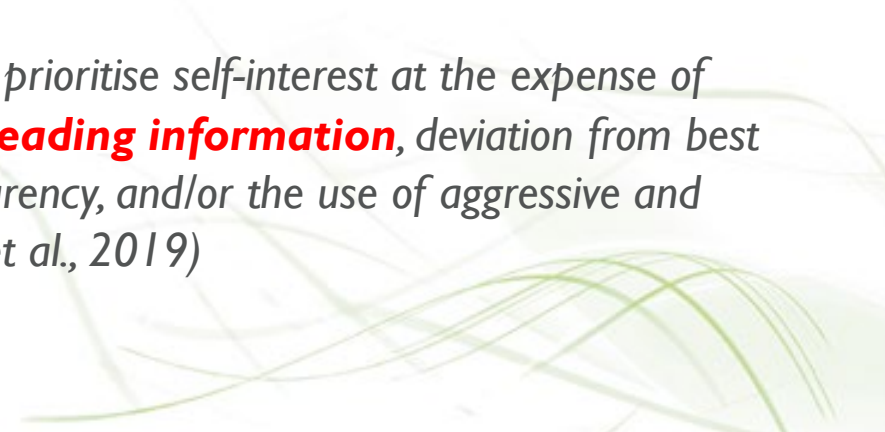
# Inappropriate journal title and scope

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Predatory journals are characterised by:

- 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*
- Bolshete (2018) found that terms such as 'Modern', 'Innovative', 'Green', 'Progressive', 'Ingenious', and 'Standard' are frequently used in predatory journal titles

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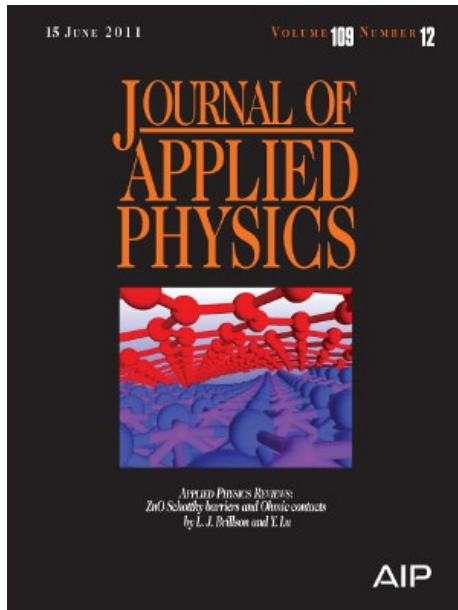


# Examples of inappropriate journal titles/ hijacked titles

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Several words are common to many titles: 'advanced', 'scientific', 'scholarly peer-reviewed', 'leading publisher'. Furthermore, Crawford (2014) found out that there are 74 'Indian Journal of...', 247 titles starting with 'Global', 300 with 'Open' (176 'Open Journal...' and 228 'The Open...'), 114 'Research Journal of...', 131 'Research Open Journal of...', and 2,208 'International Journal...'. Titles often repeat or overlap: Scientific Research and Essays, Standard Scientific Research and Essays, or International Journal of Scientific Research and Essays. Emerging common words are 'Modern', 'Innovative', 'Green', 'Progressive', 'Ingenious', and 'Standard'. Relatively recently, famous journals were hijacked by creating fake predatory websites or online sites for journals which exist only in print form: Wulfenia, Archives des Sciences, Jökull, Bothalia, Pensée, Sylwan, Ciencia e tecnica vitivinicola, or CADMO.

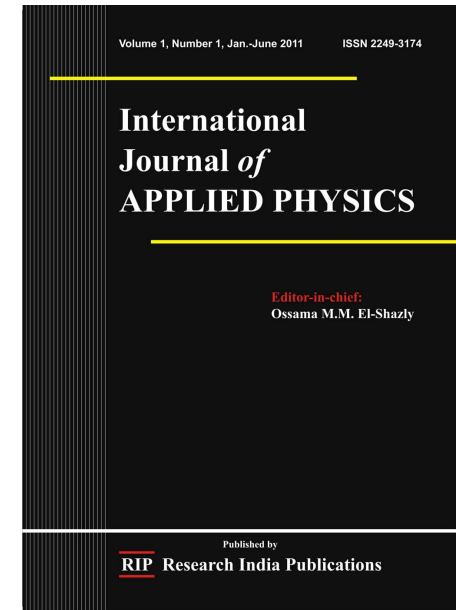
# Example of copied / mimicked journal titles



Legitimate journal



Predatory journals





# Lack of transparency in governance, editorial and publication practices

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Predatory journals are characterised by a lack of transparency in governance by:

- Adding academics as editorial members without their knowledge or permission
- Listing one editorial board for a suite of journals regardless of the discipline/s of the individual journals (Beall, 2013)
- Inventing editorial board members
- Providing no information on a contact person and/or address
- Providing no information on the editor and listing an e-mail address from a free internet service provider such as Gmail
- The use of inappropriate publication office locations, for example either in residential areas or in an “office-for-hire” building with no discernible tenants

# The main challenges and consequences

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# Two main challenges: Conceptual and practical

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Scholars and scientists evidently want to publish in the best, most reputable and appropriate journals in their fields. This is not always possible (the top journals in a field often have the longest lag times to publication with very high rejection rates). The advent of predatory journals have added to the challenges involved in selecting the best journal when considering where to submit your manuscript: the first, is a conceptual one; the second is a more practical but no less problematic consideration.

- The conceptual challenge is one of demarcation: how to distinguish between a legitimate, (hopefully) good journal and a possibly (or definitely) predatory journal.
- The practical one relates to the list of journals recognized by the DHET for subsidy-purposes and whether your journal of choice is in fact (still) on the list.

# The conceptual change: identifying the predators

Well-established journal  
(long history)  
Specialised focus in  
most cases  
Journals of national  
societies/academies  
Typically, in Q1 or Q2  
of journal rankings and  
often indexed in WoS  
and Scopus  
Prominent scholars as  
editors and on editorial  
board.

Journals that display some  
of the markers of  
predatory  
Journals originally  
predatory but repackaged  
by more reputable  
publishers  
Often difficult to  
distinguish predatory from  
poor-quality journals  
Often recently established  
with suspicious editorial  
members.

Unquestionably verified  
as a predatory journal  
The journal typically  
meets all or most of the  
defining markers as  
discussed above and are  
often included in lists of  
predatory journals  
More often than not,  
these journals are  
recently established,  
unknown publishers and  
suspicious editorial  
board.


THE BEST CHOICE

THE DIFFICULT CHOICE

THE WORST CHOICE

# The practical challenge

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- The DHET releases its lists of journals which qualify for subsidy purposes annually. Besides the list of local South African journals which consists of journals it maintains and updates regularly, it also recognizes the journals lists provided to it by Elsevier (Scopus), Clarivate Analytics (Web of Science), DOAJ and Scielo.
  - This means that the DHET takes the internal quality checks, especially of WoS and Scopus, at face value. It also assumes that once a journal is indexed in any of these databases, that it remains on the list at least for the reporting year (current list of 2023 journals apply for 2024 submissions). However, as we show overleaf, this is not always the case.
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# Discontinuation of journals on DHET accredited lists – by Scopus since March 2022

Journal title	Publisher
Computational and Mathematical Methods in Medicine	Hindawi Publishing Corporation
Contemporary Voice of Dalit	SAGE Publications Inc.
Education Sciences: Theory and Practice	Edam Egitim Danismanligi
Egyptian Journal of Hospital Medicine	Cairo Ain Shams university
International Journal Emerging Technology and Advanced Engineering	IJETAE Publication House
International Journal of Biology and Biomedical Engineering	North Atlantic University Union NAUN
International Journal of Circuits Systems and Signal Processing	North Atlantic University Union NAUN
International Journal of Mechanical Engineering	Kalahari Journals
International Journal of Nonlinear Analysis and Applications	Semnan University
International Medical Journal	Japan International Cultural Exchange Foundation
Journal of Agriculture and Crops	Rahim Yar Khan Academic Research Publishing Group
Journal of Environmental and Public Health	Hindawi Publishing Corporation
Journal of Pharmaceutical Negative Results	Medknow Publications and Media Pvt. Ltd
Open Access Macedonian Journal of Medical Sciences	University of Ss Kiril and Metodij
Res Militaris	Association Res Militaris
Universal Journal of Accounting and Finance	Horizon Reseach Publishing
World Journal of Clinical Cases	Baishideng Publishing Group
World Journal on Educational Technology	Birlesik Dunya Yenilik Arastirma ve Yayıncilik Merkezi

# Discontinuation of journals on DHET accredited lists – by WoS in March 2023

Journal Title	Publisher
Arab Journal Of Nuclear Sciences And Applications	Egyptian Society of Nuclear Sciences & Applications
Computational Intelligence And Neuroscience	Hindawi Ltd
Concurrent Engineering-research And Applications	SAGE Publications Inc
Education Research International	Hindawi Ltd
Fresenius Environmental Bulletin	Parlar Scientific Publications (P S P)
Journal of Coastal Research	Coastal Education & Research Foundation
Journal of Environmental Protection and Ecology	Scibulcom Ltd
Journal of Nanomaterials	Hindawi Ltd
Journal of Oncology	Hindawi Ltd
Journal of Renewable Materials	Tech Science Press
Journal of Risk And Financial Management	MDPI
Mathematical Problems In Engineering	Hindawi Ltd
Physical Sciences Reviews	Walter De Gruyter GMBH
Postmodern Openings	Lumen Publishing House
Progress In Nutrition	Mattioli 1885
Scanning	Wiley-Hindawi
Scientific Programming	Hindawi Ltd
Security And Communication Networks	Wiley-Hindawi
Waves In Random And Complex Media	Taylor & Francis
Wireless Communications And Mobile Computing	Wiley-Hindawi
World Family Medicine	Medi+World Int

# Discontinuation of 82 journals on DHET accredited lists – by WoS in March 2023

<b>Publisher name</b>	<b>Nr of journal titles discontinued</b>	<b>Total nr of journal titles in Core Collection</b>	<b>% Discontinued</b>
Hindawi Ltd	15	163	9.2%
Routledge Journals, Taylor & Francis Ltd	4	1187	0.3%
Wiley-Hindawi	4	26	15.4%
AME Publishing Company	2	18	11.1%
BMJ Publishing Group	2	59	3.4%
MDPI	2	207	1.0%
SAGE Publications Ltd	2	428	0.5%
Springer	2	1060	0.2%
Springer Heidelberg	2	301	0.7%
Wiley	2	1356	0.1%

Supporting integrity of the scholarly record: Our commitment to curation and selectivity in the Web of Science

More than 50 journals already de-listed this year for failing to meet our quality selection criteria



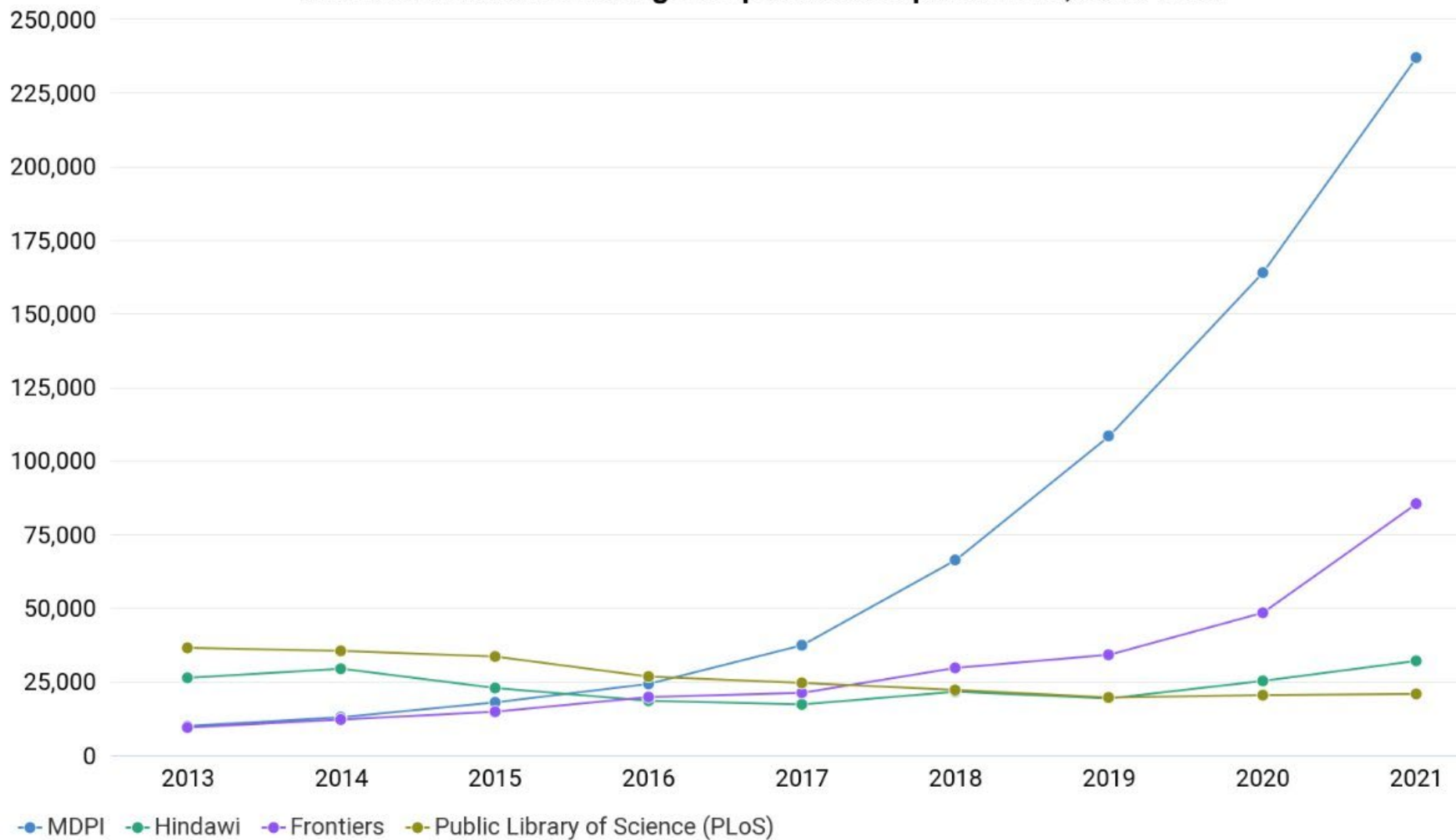
# The case of MDPI the (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute)

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- So, is MDPI predatory or not? I think it has elements of both. I would name their methods aggressive rent extracting, rather than predatory. And I also think that their current methods & growth rate are likely to make them shift towards more predatory over time.
- MDPI publishes good papers in good journals, but it also employs some strategies that are proper to predatory publishers.
- MDPI has had an impressive growth rate in the last years. It went from publishing 36 thousand articles in 2017 to 167 thousands in 2020. MDPI follows the APC publishing model, whereby accepted articles have to pay an Article Processing Charge (APC) before they are published. The APC has increased over time at MDPI. It can go up to more than 2000 CHF — MDPI is based in Switzerland — but there are several waivers and discounts. MDPI reports the average APC per article in 2020 amounted to 1180 €. Calculations by Dan Brockington show their revenue increasing from 14 mln \$ in 2015 to 191 mln \$ in 2020.

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

## Number of articles from gold open access publishers, 2013-2021

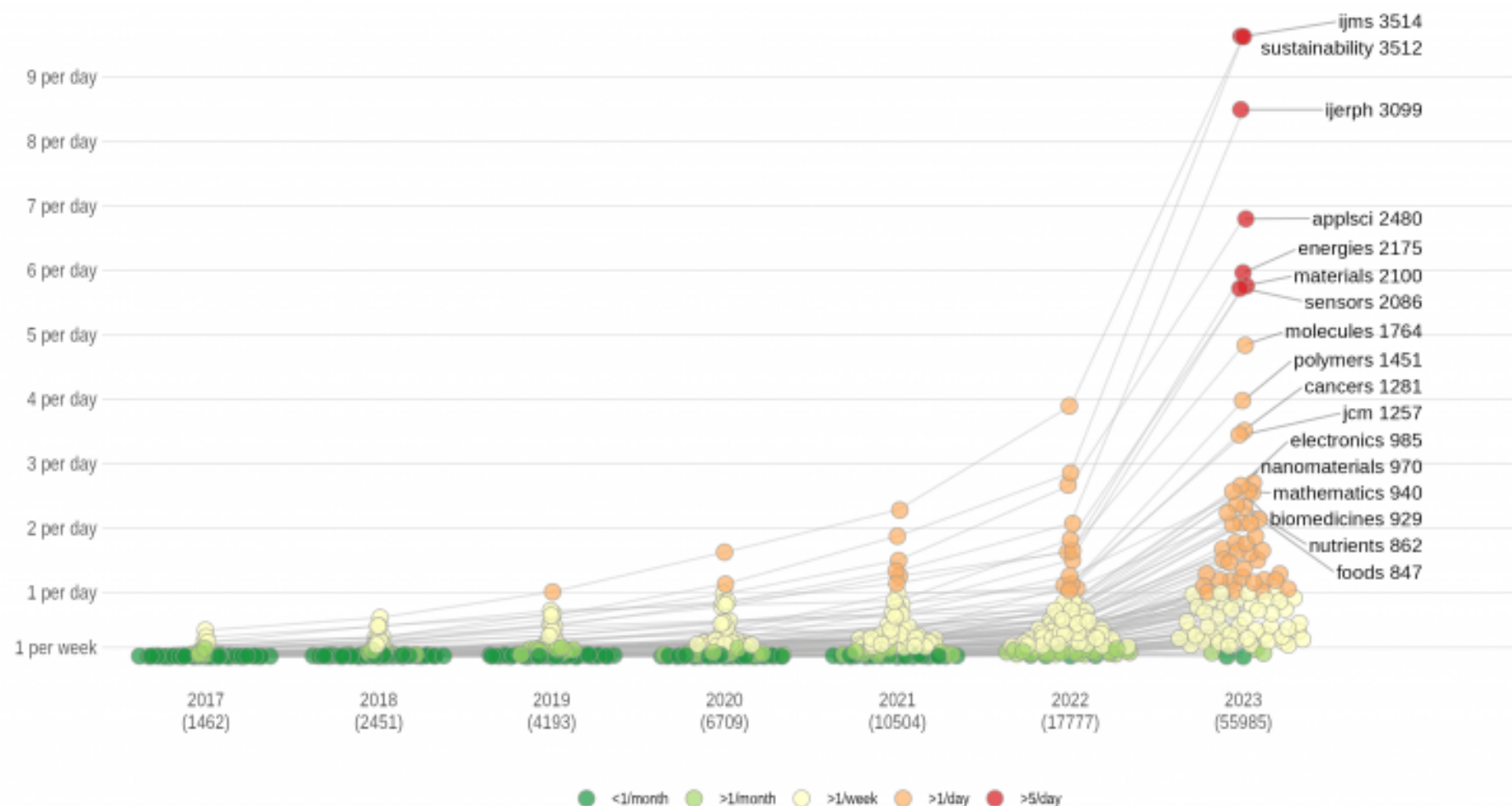


Source: <https://app.dimensions.ai>  
Exported: August 10, 2022  
Criteria: Publication Type is Article; Open Access is Gold.

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## Number of Special Issues at MDPI: 2017-22

98 journals with an Impact Factor



code @paolocrosetto -- data scraped from MDPI website

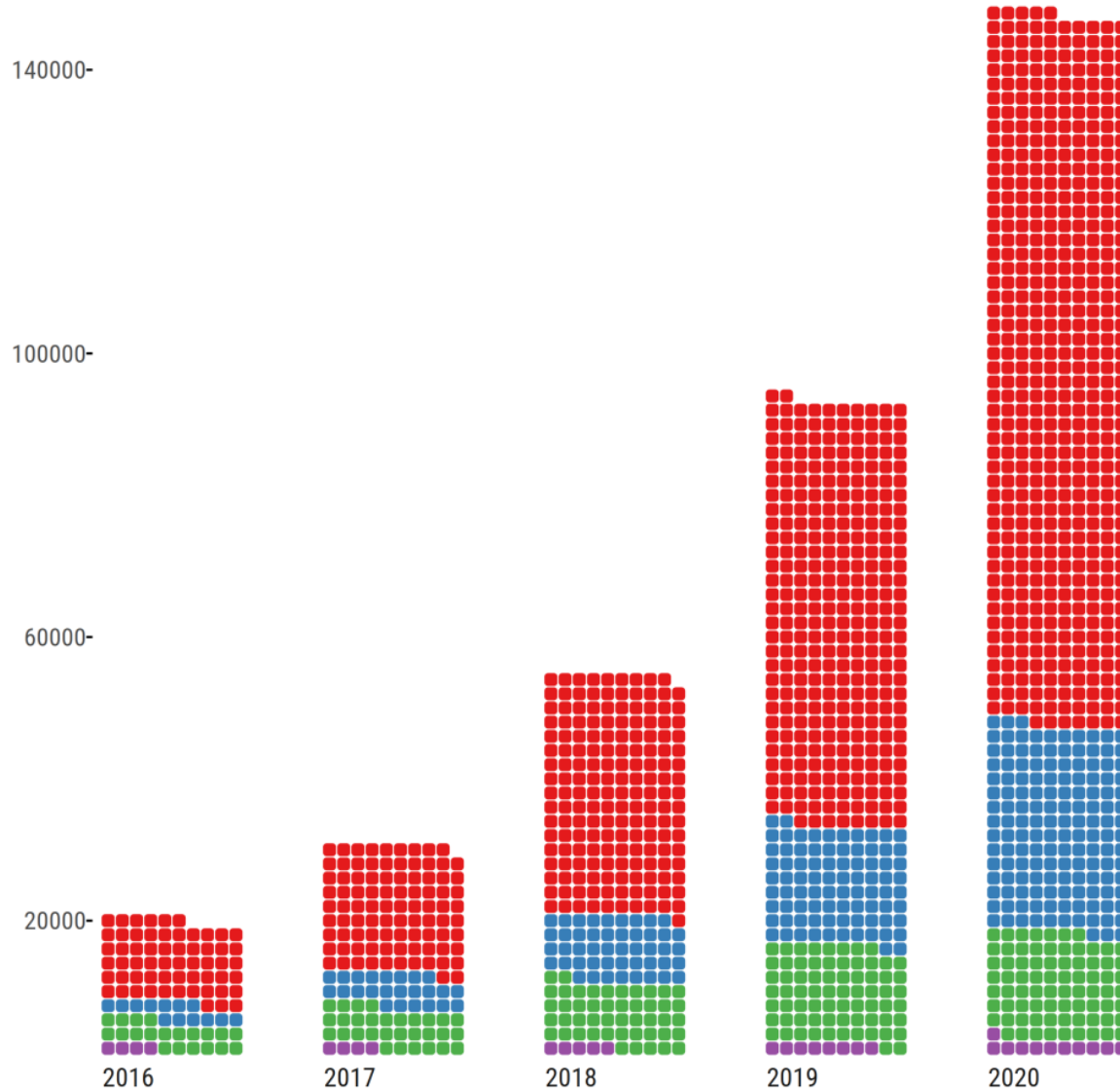
# MDPI journal statistics: articles, rejection rates and turnaround times

MDPI 25 largest journals as of 2022

JOURNAL	2022			CHANGE 2016-22		
	ARTICLES	TURNAROUND TIME	REJECTION RATE	ARTICLES	TURNAROUND TIME	REJECTION RATE
Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health	17085	41.51 days	45.21%	12.96x	-36.34%	-11.59pp
Sustainability	17000	41.75 days	48.74%	12.4x	-40.66%	-13.49pp
Int. J. Mol. Sci.	16181	34.34 days	51.06%	7.33x	-34.24%	-12.76pp
Appl. Sci.	12979	36.88 days	43.01%	31.61x	-37.71%	-33.55pp
Sensors	10006	37.38 days	40.24%	3.74x	-42.92%	-14.55pp
Energies	9628	36.11 days	39.32%	8.21x	-48.88%	-21.67pp
Materials	9064	36.51 days	29.1%	7.86x	-30.79%	-26.93pp
Molecules	9038	32.98 days	36.92%	4.49x	-25.87%	-11.27pp
J. Clin. Med.	7533	38.86 days	44.27%	65.66x	-35.42%	-1.53pp
Remote Sens.	6391	42.54 days	54.62%	5.65x	-46.68%	-4.42pp
Cancers	6242	38.09 days	52.07%	56.8x	-36.95%	+17.94pp
Polymers	5546	32.03 days	27.92%	13.08x	-33.72%	-12.85pp
Nutrients	5397	33.5 days	47.4%	6.08x	-43.89%	-2.36pp
Mathematics	4831	35.54 days	59.78%	74.48x	-53.24%	-22.06pp
Nanomaterials	4495	32.05 days	35.01%	17.42x	-39%	-30.09pp
Electronics	4228	34.05 days	42.08%	45.46x	-49.05%	-34.43pp
Water	4129	39.61 days	40.14%	6.09x	-44.56%	-19.44pp
Cells	4114	40.97 days	35.53%	90.42x	-18.43%	+17.35pp
Foods	4113	34.81 days	47.3%	45.74x	-39.3%	+18.97pp
Animals	3585	42.79 days	42.58%	48.11x	-39.98%	+17.81pp
Plants	3575	35.15 days	48.09%	86.2x	-43.14%	+2.97pp
Biomedicines	3287	36.7 days	46.64%	120.74x	-26.92%	-25.53pp
Agronomy	3225	36.3 days	48.33%	55.58x	-42.16%	+2.72pp
Diagnostics	3220	36.14 days	45.41%	70.56x	-38.13%	+11.08pp
Pharmaceutics	2842	37.17 days	49.28%	85.12x	-41.54%	+8.65pp


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

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




# Finally, what advice do we give to a student or young scholar?

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- Your default position when approached to submit a paper to any journal is to be suspicious!
  - Consult a senior colleague/scholar for advice on the selection of scientific journals
  - Look for the telltale signs as outlined above and check Beall's list (the *Paripax Journal* is listed by Beall)
  - As a general rule aim to publish in the top journals in your field. These are typically indexed in the *Web of Science* and/or *Scopus/DOAJ*. There are more than 26 000 journal titles in these two indexed combined. There are more than sufficient high-quality journals in your field to publish in.
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# Announcing the development of a dedicated website to support scholars in publication decisions

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- The Publication Quality Framework Collaborative Programme (PQFP) funded by the UCDFP
  - One of the four work-packages of the 3-year programme is the development of a website to support research managers, academics and students in making optimal and evidence-based scholarly publication decisions
  - A specific project is to establish a functionality on the website to assist academics and students to distinguish between good, high-quality and reputable journals on the one hand and journals of poor quality and possible questionable and fraudulent publication practices
  - Our aim is to launch the first version of this website by the end of the year or early in 2024 at the latest
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# Contact anyone of these people to get the slides

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[jm6@sun.ac.za](mailto:jm6@sun.ac.za)



[mvn3@sun.ac.za](mailto:mvn3@sun.ac.za)



[wildkl@sun.ac.za](mailto:wildkl@sun.ac.za)



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**Additional resources and references**

# Lists of predatory journals

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An anonymous postdoctoral researcher retrieved a cached copy of Beall's list of predatory publishers & journals is available <https://beallslist.net/>.

There is an update section below the list (in order to preserve the original list's integrity), where he/she adds new predatory publishers/journals

<https://beallslist.net/#update>




# Lists of predatory journals continued

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- Cabells International launched Cabells' Predatory Reports (previously called the Blacklist) in June 2017, and the Predatory Reports database is available on a subscription basis <https://www2.cabells.com/about-predatory>
- The Kscien Organization for Scientific Research, a not-for-profit organisation, based in Kurdistan, maintains the Kscien list <http://kscien.org/predatory.php>


# Lists of predatory journals continued

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- An anonymous group of scholars and information professionals maintain a list of possibly predatory journals that is based on an archived version of Beall's list  
<https://predatoryreports.org/>
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# Resources on predatory journals

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- Download the Journal Evaluation Tool  
[https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/librarian\\_pubs/40/](https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/librarian_pubs/40/)
  - Use the Think.Check.Submit checklist  
<https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
  - Is the journal a member of COPE  
<https://publicationethics.org/members>
  - Consult the Directory of Open Access Journals  
(<https://doaj.org/>)
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