

Predatory Journals and Academic Integrity: Awareness, Perceptions, and Group Differences Among English Language Faculty

Abdullah Noori* 

Department of English Language and Literature, Kabul University, Kabul, Afghanistan

ABSTRACT

Predatory journals have a growing concern for academic integrity. This study explored the level of awareness and perceptions of English Language faculty at public universities in Afghanistan concerning predatory journals and their impact on academic integrity. To gather data, an online questionnaire was shared with English faculty members, resulting in 101 completed responses out of 134 invitations. The responses revealed that while many faculty members are somewhat familiar with the concept of predatory journals, there remains uncertainty regarding their distinct characteristics. Significant differences in awareness were associated with institution size and years of experience, but not with gender or academic rank. Respondents expressed notable apprehension about the consequences of publishing in these journals, particularly regarding the risk to academic integrity, the potential to mislead students, and the vulnerability of early-career researchers, especially those from larger institutions and those with over 10 years of academic experience. The findings stress the importance of specialized training, well-defined institutional policies, and mentoring programs as effective ways to promote ethical publishing practices. Building on these findings, future research could investigate how knowledge of and vulnerability to predatory journals differ among disciplines and across regions.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Revised: 10 Aug, 2026
Accepted 14 Aug, 2026

KEYWORDS

Academic Integrity; Higher Education; Predatory Journals; Research Ethics; Scholarly Publishing

Cite as: Noori, A. (2026). Predatory Journals and Academic Integrity: Awareness, Perceptions, and Group Differences Among English Language Faculty. *Aureviaj Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*. 1(1), 1-16 <https://aureviaj.com/ajssh/article/view/7>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

INTRODUCTION

The academic publishing landscape has experienced significant changes in recent years. These changes stem from the rise of open-access (OA) publishing and the increasing pressure on academics to publish frequently in order to advance in their academic careers (Larivière & Cassidy, 2019). Open-access models have made scholarly research more available, but they have also led to an increase in predatory journals. According to Beall (2013-2012), and Grudniewicz et al. (2019), these publications prioritize profit over academic quality, often lacking peer reviews, employing misleading metrics, and using aggressive solicitation methods. These journals exploit scholars' vulnerabilities, especially those who feel pressured to publish or are concerned about falling behind. They pose a significant threat to academic integrity, which relies on ethical principles of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in scholarly work (Bretag, 2015; ICAI, 2021).

Predatory journals became a significant concern with the growth of open-access publishing in the early 2000s. The open-access model, which relies on article processing charges (APCs) to make research accessible to everyone, has been exploited by dishonest publishers (Grudniewicz et al., 2019). These publishers offer little editorial oversight in return for fees (Kurniawan et al., 2021; Severin & Low, 2020).

Jeffrey Beall's important work first brought this problem to light. He identified predatory journals by examining factors such as unsolicited email invitations, the absence of transparent peer-review processes, and fake impact factors (Beall, 2013; Beall, 2012). Even though Beall's list was discontinued in 2017 due to legal issues, it sparked a global conversation about ethical publishing and led to more research on the reach and effects of predatory journals (Panjikaran & Mathew, 2020). Recent estimates indicate that predatory journals publish over 500,000 articles annually, generating revenues exceeding \$100 million. This demonstrates their significant economic impact in academia (Shen & Björk, 2015).

The effects of predatory publishing are widespread. They impact individual scholars, institutions, and the academic community as a whole. For researchers, publishing in these journals can harm their professional reputation, decrease their citation impact, and hinder career advancement (Moher et al., 2017; Kurt, 2018). At the institutional level, having predatory publications in faculty portfolios can damage the credibility of academic programs and distort institutional rankings. More generally, predatory journals erode trust in scholarly communication by disseminating low-quality or even fraudulent research (Eriksson & Helgesson, 2017; McLeod et al., 2018; Bohannon, 2019), thereby misleading policymakers, practitioners, and the public (Clark & Thompson, 2022). These problems are particularly worrying when it comes to academic integrity. Predatory journals bypass the peer-review processes that ensure the research is valid and reliable (Cobey et al., 2018; Cress & Sarwer, 2019; Grudniewicz et al., 2019).

In the humanities, particularly in English Language studies, the issues related to predatory journals differ from those in STEM fields, as most research on predatory publishing has focused on STEM (Cobey et al., 2018; Moher et al., 2017). Faculty in English Language often concentrate on qualitative research. They prioritize interpretive methods, textual analysis, and critical theory, which require long periods of reflection and argumentation (Biber & Gray, 2016). Unlike STEM disciplines, which have fast publication rates and rely on empirical data, humanities research does not fit the high-volume, quick-turnaround model of predatory journals (Eve, 2020; Nygaard, 2023). The pressure to publish remains strong, driven by institutional metrics for tenure and promotion that prioritize publication counts over quality (Larivière & Cassidy, 2019). This situation makes humanities scholars, particularly those early in their careers, vulnerable to predatory publishers that promise quick publication and wide visibility (Bagues et al., 2023; Strinzel et al., 2022).

Recent studies have deepened our understanding of predatory journals and their impacts on academic integrity. Grudniewicz et al. (2019) described predatory journals as establishments that prioritize self-interest over scholarly integrity. They are characterized by misinformation, departures from established editorial practices, a lack of transparency, and aggressive solicitation techniques (Beall, 2012). Likewise, Shamseer et al. (2021) identified signs that help

researchers distinguish between predatory publications and legitimate ones. These signs include poor website design, grammatical errors, and overly broad journal scopes. Cobey et al. (2020) found that predatory journals often exploit the open-access model by mimicking the appearance of trustworthy journals.

Although no single characteristic is sufficient to establish that a journal is predatory, several recurring features can help researchers distinguish questionable journals from legitimate scholarly publications. One important characteristic is a lack of transparent and credible peer review. Predatory journals may promise extremely rapid publication, provide little or no information about the review process, or accept manuscripts with minimal evidence of substantive editorial evaluation (Grudniewicz et al., 2019; Shamseer et al., 2017). Another warning sign is misleading or fabricated information about journal metrics and indexing. Questionable journals may display unofficial or unverifiable impact factors, use misleading ranking terminology, or falsely claim inclusion in recognized indexing services. Therefore, researchers should verify indexing claims directly through the official databases rather than relying solely on statements presented on a journal's website (Shamseer et al., 2017).

The composition and transparency of the editorial board should also be examined carefully. Legitimate journals generally provide identifiable editors and editorial-board members whose institutional affiliations and scholarly activities can be independently verified. In contrast, predatory journals may list scholars without their permission, provide incomplete affiliations, or use editorial-board information that cannot be independently confirmed. Website characteristics can provide additional warning signs, including grammatical and spelling errors, exaggerated claims about journal prestige, unclear publisher information, excessively broad journal scopes, and missing or vague information about publication policies, peer review, and publication fees (Shamseer et al., 2017). Aggressive or unsolicited email invitations that promise rapid publication or emphasize guaranteed acceptance are another commonly reported warning sign, particularly when the invitation is unrelated to the researcher's field (Beall, 2012; Grudniewicz et al., 2019).

Researchers should therefore use a combination of verification practices rather than relying on a single blacklist or individual warning sign. Before submitting a manuscript, authors should examine the journal's publisher and editorial information, verify the identities and affiliations of editors, examine the transparency of the peer-review process, confirm claimed indexing through the official websites of the relevant databases, check whether the journal clearly identifies its article processing charges and publication policies, and evaluate whether the journal's scope and recent articles are consistent with the author's field. For open-access journals, authors can also consult recognized resources such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), while institutional librarians, experienced researchers, and research offices can provide additional assistance. These checks are particularly important for early-career researchers, who may be more vulnerable to deceptive invitations and promises of rapid publication (Masic, 2021; Xia et al., 2015).

Importantly, open access itself should not be treated as an indicator of predatory publishing. Legitimate open-access journals may charge article processing fees and can maintain rigorous peer-review and editorial standards. Similarly, the absence of a journal from a particular

database does not automatically establish that the journal is predatory. Rather, authors should consider multiple indicators and verify the information supplied by the journal independently. This approach reduces the risk of incorrectly labeling legitimate journals while helping researchers identify publishers that systematically depart from accepted standards of scholarly publishing (Grudniewicz et al., 2019; Shamseer et al., 2017).

Systemic factors are also highlighted in the literature as reasons for the ongoing issue of predatory publishing. The publish-or-perish culture, prevalent in many fields, prioritizes quantity over quality. This pressures researchers to seek out questionable publication venues (Bagues et al., 2023; Lee, 2014; Rawat & Meena, 2014). Early-career researchers feel this pressure the most. They often lack the experience or resources to spot predatory journals (Bagues et al., 2023; Xia et al., 2015). Institutional evaluation systems that rely on simple metrics, such as publication counts or journal impact factors, exacerbate the situation by unintentionally encouraging submissions to predatory outlets (Ahmad et al., 2019; Larivière & Cassidy, 2019). In the humanities, publication timelines often take longer because of the qualitative nature of research. This makes the chance for faster publication particularly appealing (Eve, 2015).

Moreover, the emergence of predatory conferences, which reflect the characteristics of predatory journals, adds to the confusion, as researchers might unknowingly share their work at events with little academic value (Godskesen et al., 2022; McCrostie, 2021).

Nevertheless, efforts have been made to address the threat of predatory publishing. Resources such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Cabells' Predatory Reports help individuals distinguish between credible and predatory publications (Akça & Akbulut, 2021; Mitchell, 2008; Rupp et al., 2019; Shrestha, 2021; Strinzel et al., 2022). The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has also published a series of guidelines for the authors to improve ethical publishing practices and emphasize transparency and accountability (Lane et al., 2018). Access to these resources is often limited by subscription fees or lack of institutional support, especially for researchers from underfunded institutions (Berger & Cirasella, 2020). Proposed educational programs include adding publication ethics to graduate training, which will help students navigate the publishing world more effectively (Masic, 2021; Shrestha, 2021).

Recent studies have also looked into the global issues of predatory publishing. Research shows that academics from low- and middle-income countries face significant challenges (Xia et al., 2015). They often feel pressured to publish in international journals for better visibility and academic promotion. This vulnerability is exacerbated by limited access to credible publishing platforms and mentorship, making predatory journals a more appealing option (Beall, 2012; Kurniawan et al., 2021; Shen & Björk, 2015). In the humanities, the dominance of English-language journals in global scholarship poses a greater risk for non-native English speakers. These publishers capitalize on linguistic and cultural gaps (Bagues et al., 2023).

Despite the growing body of research, a noticeable lack of studies remains in the humanities, particularly in English language studies. According to Cobey et al. (2018) and Moher et al. (2017), the majority of studies have focused on STEM fields, where predatory publishing is more prevalent due to a focus on empirical work and the push for rapid publication. Scholars in the humanities face unique challenges, including limited access to specialized indexing tools

and a slower publication process, which can make predatory journals more appealing (Eve, 2015; Shehata & Elgllab, 2018). The qualitative aspect of English language research, which emphasizes strong arguments and deep interpretation, is particularly susceptible to the low editorial standards of predatory journals (Biber & Gray, 2016).

Therefore, this study investigates how English language faculty perceive predatory journals and their impact on academic integrity. It centers around three research questions:

1. What is the level of awareness among English Language faculty regarding predatory journals?
2. What are their perceptions of the impact of predatory journals on academic integrity?
3. Are there significant differences in faculty members' awareness of and perceptions toward predatory journals based on gender, institution size, academic rank, and years of professional experience?

This study combines insights from recent literature and empirical data to add to the discussion on academic integrity. It offers practical recommendations for faculty, institutions, and professional organizations in the humanities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative descriptive survey approach was used to assess faculty awareness and perceptions of predatory journals. This method was chosen because it can provide important insights into the prevalence and patterns of faculty perceptions, supporting the study's aim to yield reliable and generalizable findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2014). An online questionnaire was designed and distributed to collect data.

Population and Sampling

The research population consisted of 134 English Language faculty members from public universities in Afghanistan. The faculty included respondents from notable institutions such as Kabul University, Herat University, and Kandahar University. Participants were chosen through random sampling to represent different academic ranks (lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor), years of experience (1 to 30 years), and gender. Out of the 134 invited faculty, 101 completed and returned the questionnaire. The final sample for the study consisted of 55% male and 45% female faculty. Respondents needed to be active faculty members at their respective universities with experience in academic publishing to ensure focus on the study's topic of predatory journals.

Data Collection

An online questionnaire comprising 22 items was developed to achieve the research objectives. It focused on awareness and perceptions concerning predatory journals. The questionnaire had three sections:

- **Demographic Information:** Questions about academic rank, years of experience, gender, and publication history provide context for responses.

- Awareness and Perceptions: Eighteen Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) measure awareness of predatory journals and their perceived impact on academic integrity. The items were adjusted based on questions used in earlier studies (Cobey et al., 2018; Shamseer et al., 2017).

The questionnaire adhered to standard survey design principles, prioritizing clarity, neutrality, and cultural sensitivity in the Afghan context. A pilot study included faculty members from one Afghan university to ensure understanding and relevance, especially for non-native English speakers. Feedback from the pilot led to changes, such as simplifying terminology and adding examples of predatory journal characteristics. The final questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms in mid-2022.

Data Collection Procedures

The link to the questionnaire was sent via email and WhatsApp to faculty members found through university directories and professional networks in Afghanistan. The invitations contained a study information sheet and consent form. The invitations emphasized voluntary participation and anonymity (APA, 2020). The survey was open for six weeks in mid-2022, while several notifications were sent to non-respondents to increase response rates.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 29) in terms of both descriptive and inferential statistics. For overall patterns of awareness and perceptions, means and standard deviations were calculated. For group comparisons, Independent Samples t-tests and One-way ANOVA were used.

Ethical Considerations

This research received approval from the Academic Council of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, Kabul University. Informed consent was obtained. All responses were treated with strict confidentiality, and the data were fully anonymized to protect participants' identities.

RESULTS

Demographics

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Study Respondents

Variable	Category	N	Percent
Gender	Male	56	55.4%
	Female	45	44.6%
Academic Rank	Lecturer	35	34.7%
	Assistant Professor	30	29.7%
	Associate Professor	25	24.8%
	Full Professor	11	10.9%

Variable	Category	N	Percent
Years of Experience	1–5 years	40	39.6%
	6–10 years	35	34.7%
	10+ years	26	25.7%
Institution Size	Large (>5,000 students)	60	59.4%
	Small ($\leq$ 5,000 students)	41	40.6%

Note: Institution size was calculated using student enrollment data from the universities' websites. The sample reflects faculty from both large and small public universities in Afghanistan.

Awareness of Predatory Journals

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for survey items assessing faculty members' awareness of predatory journals. The results indicate a generally high but variable level of awareness among faculty. For instance, respondents reported strong familiarity with the characteristics of predatory journals ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 0.8$). However, their ability to identify predatory journals based on specific criteria, such as website content, was less consistent ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.9$), suggesting gaps in practical identification skills.

Table 2: *Faculty Awareness of Predatory Journals*

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
1	I am familiar with the characteristics of predatory journals	4.1	0.8
2	I can identify predatory journals based on their website content	3.8	0.9
3	I recognize unsolicited email invitations as a sign of predatory journals	3.9	0.9
4	I am aware of resources to verify journal legitimacy (e.g., DOAJ, Cabells)	3.7	1.0
5	I understand the importance of checking journal indexing (e.g., MLA International Bibliography)	3.8	0.9
6	I can distinguish predatory journals from legitimate open-access journals	3.6	1.0
7	I am familiar with the concept of fake impact factors used by predatory journals	3.9	0.8
8	I know how to check the credibility of journal editorial boards	3.7	0.9
9	I am aware of the risks of publishing in predatory journals	4.2	0.7

Inferential analyses were conducted to examine the differences in awareness scores (averaged across the nine items) by gender, institution size, academic rank, and years of experience. Table 3 below summarizes the results of independent samples t-tests examining awareness scores regarding predatory journals across gender and institutional size.

Table 3: *Independent t-tests for Awareness Scores*

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig
Gender	Male	56	3.90	0.70	1.30	99	0.20
	Female	45	3.70	0.80			
Institution Size	Large (>5,000 students)	60	4.00	0.60	2.50	99	0.014
	Small ($\leq$ 5,000 students)	41	3.60	0.80			

The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in awareness between male ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.70$) and female ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.80$) faculty members, $t(99) = 1.30$, $p = 0.20$. However, significant differences were found based on the size of the institution. Faculty members working in larger institutions reported significantly higher awareness ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.60$) than those in smaller institutions ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.80$), $t(99) = 2.50$, $p = 0.014$.

Moreover, Table 4 below presents the results of a One-way ANOVA test examining awareness scores across academic rank and years of experience. No statistically significant differences were found in awareness across academic ranks—Lecturer ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.80$), Assistant Professor ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.70$), Associate Professor ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.75$), and Full Professor ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.65$)— $F(3, 97) = 1.50$, $p = 0.22$.

Table 4: One-way ANOVA for Awareness Scores

Variable	Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	F-value	df	p-value
Academic Rank	Lecturer	35	3.80	0.80	1.50	3, 97	0.22
	Assistant Professor	30	3.90	0.70			
	Associate Professor	25	3.85	0.75			
	Full Professor	11	4.00	0.65			
Years of Experience	1–5 years	40	3.70	0.90	4.80	2, 98	0.010
	6–10 years	35	3.90	0.70			
	10+ years	26	4.20	0.70			

In contrast, years of professional experience were found to have a significant influence on awareness levels. Faculty with over 10 years of experience reported the highest mean awareness score ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.70$), followed by those with 6–10 years ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.70$), and 1–5 years ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.90$), with the ANOVA yielding $F(2, 98) = 4.80$, $p = 0.010$.

Perceptions of Impact on Academic Integrity

Table 5 provides descriptive statistics for items evaluating faculty members' perceptions of the negative impacts of predatory journals on academic integrity.

Table 5: Perceptions of Predatory Journals' Impact on Academic Integrity

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
10	Predatory journals undermine the credibility of scholarly work	4.2	0.8
11	Publishing in predatory journals harms the reputation of English Language scholarship	4.0	0.9
12	Predatory journals mislead students about research quality	4.1	0.8
13	Predatory journals harm the public's trust in academic research	4.0	0.9
14	Publishing in predatory journals affects faculty career progression	3.9	0.9
15	Predatory journals dilute the quality of humanities research	4.1	0.8
16	Predatory journals exploit early-career researchers	4.3	0.7
17	Predatory journals undermine peer-review standards	4.2	0.8
18	Lack of institutional guidelines increases the risk of publishing in predatory journals	4.4	0.7

Faculty expressed significant concerns about the detrimental effects of predatory journals, particularly regarding their impact on the credibility of scholarly work ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.8$) and the reputation of English Language scholarship ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 0.9$).

Furthermore, inferential analyses were conducted to examine the differences in perception scores by gender, institution size, academic rank, and years of experience. To examine if there is any significant difference between the perception scores of respondents in terms of gender and institutional size, an Independent Samples T-test was conducted.

Table 6 below presents the results of independent samples t-tests. The results found no statistically significant difference between male ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.70$) and female ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.80$) faculty members, $t(99) = 1.40$, $p = 0.16$.

Table 6: *Independent t-tests for Perception Scores*

Variable	Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	df	p-value (two-tailed)
Gender	Male	56	4.10	0.70	1.40	99	0.16
	Female	45	3.90	0.80			
Institution Size	Large (>5,000 students)	60	4.30	0.70	2.80	99	0.006
	Small ($\leq 5,000$ students)	41	3.90	0.90			

In contrast, institution size was found to have a significant effect on perception scores. Faculty affiliated with large institutions reported significantly higher levels of concern ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.70$) compared to those at smaller institutions ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.90$), $t(99) = 2.80$, $p = 0.006$.

Furthermore, to examine if there is any significant difference between the mean scores of respondents in terms of academic rank and years of experience, a One-way ANOVA was conducted. Table 7 below reports the results of one-way ANOVA.

Table 7: *One-way ANOVA for Perception Scores*

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	F-value	df	p-value
Academic Rank	Lecturer	35	4.00	0.80	1.90	3, 97	0.13
	Assistant Professor	30	4.10	0.70			
	Associate Professor	25	4.05	0.75			
	Full Professor	11	4.20	0.65			
Years of Experience	1–5 years	40	3.90	0.90	3.60	2, 98	0.031
	6–10 years	35	4.10	0.70			
	10+ years	26	4.30	0.60			

The analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in perception scores across academic ranks—Lecturer ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.80$), Assistant Professor ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.70$), Associate Professor ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.75$), and Full Professor ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.65$)— $F(3, 97) = 1.90$, $p = 0.13$.

However, a significant difference was found based on years of teaching and research experience, $F(2, 98) = 3.60$, $p = 0.031$. Faculty with more than 10 years of experience ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.60$) expressed significantly higher concern about the effects of predatory publishing than those with 1–5 years of experience ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.90$), as confirmed by post-hoc Tukey's HSD test ($p = 0.026$). No statistically significant difference was observed between faculty with 6–10 years of experience and the other groups.

DISCUSSION

This study examines how English Language faculty at public universities in Afghanistan perceive and understand predatory journals. It also investigates how factors such as academic experience, institutional size, and faculty rank influence these perceptions.

The results indicate that English Language faculty generally have a moderate level of awareness of predatory journals; however, this awareness does not always translate into the ability to identify specific warning signs. This distinction is important because recognizing the general concept of predatory publishing is different from evaluating the legitimacy of a particular journal. In the present study, respondents reported relatively strong familiarity with predatory journals ($M = 4.1$), but their confidence in identifying such journals from website content was lower ($M = 3.8$), and their ability to distinguish predatory journals from legitimate open-access journals was lower still ($M = 3.6$). These findings suggest that faculty members may benefit from more practical guidance on journal evaluation. In particular, researchers should examine whether a journal provides transparent information about peer review, editorial-board membership, publisher identity, publication fees, and ethical policies; independently verify claims of indexing and journal metrics; examine whether editors and their affiliations can be confirmed; and treat promises of guaranteed or exceptionally rapid publication, aggressive unsolicited invitations, and unexplained or unverifiable metrics as warning signs. At the same time, these indicators should be considered collectively rather than individually, because a single characteristic does not necessarily establish that a journal is predatory (Grudniewicz et al., 2019; Shamseer et al., 2017). This practical approach is especially relevant to early-career researchers and scholars working in environments where access to publishing guidance and research-support services may be limited (Demir, 2018).

This study also revealed inadequate awareness of resources, including the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Cabells' whitelist/blacklist, and indexing services such as Scopus or Web of Science. Such databases are crucial for evaluating the legitimacy of journals. According to Shehata et al. (2018), the lack of gatekeeping in developing academic settings enables predatory journals to thrive, capitalizing on information gaps and the pressure on academics to publish for career advancement.

The study's findings also revealed that English faculty perceive predatory journals as a serious threat to academic integrity. Respondents largely agreed that these journals damage the credibility of scholarship, mislead students about the quality of research, and erode trust in academic work. These perspectives match the global scholarly consensus that predatory publishing undermines the core principles of academia. Grudniewicz et al. (2019), in their prominent Nature article, highlight that predatory journals imitate legitimate journals but skip

rigorous peer review. This allows flawed or even fake research to enter the academic record. Such practices undermine the reliability of scholarly communication and can have detrimental effects in areas where evidence-based research is crucial. In the humanities and social sciences, where interpretation is often subjective, predatory publishing can muddle academic discussion and mislead public understanding (Cress & Sarwer, 2019).

Faculty members also noted that publishing in predatory journals can damage their academic reputation. This aligns with findings by Cobey et al. (2018), who discovered that scholars often worry about how colleagues and other researchers will perceive their work in these journals. In places where resources are limited and opportunities for international collaboration are scarce, damage to reputation can significantly impact a researcher's academic career. For English Language faculty, whose work is often judged on language accuracy and scholarly quality, publishing in predatory journals may lead to doubts about their academic skills.

Notably, there was strong agreement that predatory journals exploit early-career researchers. This aligns with findings from Moher et al. (2017), who argue that inexperienced researchers, particularly in non-Western contexts, are disproportionately targeted by fraudulent journals that promise rapid publication and international visibility. These journals often charge high fees while failing to offer quality peer review or indexing services. This practice leads to both financial and academic exploitation.

Faculty members generally agreed that the absence of institutional publishing guidelines increases vulnerability. This indicates that concerns about predatory publishing impact the entire system, not just individual researchers. Without policy frameworks, publication vetting processes, or faculty training, institutions unintentionally expose their scholars to unethical outlets. Grudniewicz et al. (2019) note that institutional culture and policies greatly influence responsible research behavior. When there is no guidance, as seen in many Afghan universities, the academic community becomes fragmented and more susceptible to low-quality publishing practices.

A key part of this study was examining how demographic factors affect awareness and perception. The lack of significant differences by gender aligns with findings from several international studies, including those by (Cobey et al., 2018). This suggests that concerns about publishing ethics are recognized across gender lines. However, the size of the institution and the experience of the faculty consistently affected awareness and perceptions. Awareness and perceptions were linked to years of experience and the size of the institution. Faculty at larger institutions—usually located in major cities like Kabul or Herat—are more likely to engage in international collaboration, attend research seminars, and access library resources that promote publishing literacy (Moher et al., 2017). Faculty members with over 10 years of experience indicated a higher capacity to identify predatory practices and held higher negative perceptions concerning predatory publishers. This finding aligns with research conducted by Bagues et al. (2023), which suggests that academic experience enhances familiarity with scholarly standards and fosters critical thinking about publication options. These insights illustrate a troubling reality. Early-career researchers and those at smaller, less-funded institutions may lack the necessary knowledge to avoid predatory publishers and fall prey to them. This is especially

worrisome because, according to (Macháček & Srholec, 2021), junior faculty members often feel pressured to publish in order to secure job security or promotions.

Years of experience also played an important role. Faculty with more than 10 years of teaching and research experience showed greater awareness and stronger concern for academic integrity. As prior studies (Bagues et al., 2023; Macháček & Srholec, 2021) have shown, academic maturity often correlates with exposure to research ethics and the informal knowledge gained through mentorship and networking. In contrast, early-career faculty may rely heavily on anecdotal advice or peer guidance, which can often be incomplete or outdated.

Academic rank did not significantly affect awareness or perception. This may reflect the flat structure of publishing support at Afghan institutions, where advancing in rank does not always guarantee better access to professional development. It may also suggest that the pressure to publish affects faculty at all levels in a similar manner, aligning with the global "publish or perish" trend (Memon, 2018).

Recommendations

The findings point out several structural challenges that need to be addressed:

- First, universities must engage more effectively and create clear policies on publication ethics. They should also provide regular training and workshops on journal evaluation as part of faculty development programs. This will help faculty publish in credible journals and avoid predatory publishers.
- Second, the Ministry of Higher Education should regularly share lists of blacklisted and whitelisted journals with universities.
- Third, faculty mentorship programs that connect early-career scholars with experienced researchers can help share practical knowledge about ethical publishing and how to avoid predatory journal outlets.
- Finally, there is a need for international collaboration. Afghan universities, especially those with limited internal resources, should seek partnerships with international academic organizations and NGOs that offer open-access training and support for scholars regarding publishing practices.

Limitations

The quantitative design in this study limits our understanding of faculty experiences. Qualitative methods could improve this (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The sample only included public universities in Afghanistan, which may limit the applicability of the findings to private institutions or other countries. The response rate of 65.6% is acceptable, but it may also reveal logistical issues, such as problems with internet access and political instability.

CONCLUSION

This study of the English Language faculty in Afghanistan's public universities highlights significant problems caused by predatory journals. It reveals a situation characterized by moderate awareness and uneven skills in identifying issues, along with serious concerns about

academic integrity. The findings indicate that while faculty can identify common traits of predatory journals, they struggle to recognize specific signs, such as dubious editorial practices. This difficulty stems from a lack of training and guidelines from their institutions. The differences in awareness, along with the view that predatory journals damage scholarly credibility and exploit vulnerable researchers, stress the urgent need for systematic changes in Afghanistan's academic environment, which has limited resources. Respondents frequently noted the absence of workshops and clear policies, which increases the risk of predatory publishing. This risk is exceptionally high for early-career faculty who are under intense pressure to publish. By addressing these challenges through targeted training, institutional guidelines, and regional advocacy, Afghan universities can foster a culture of ethical research. This will help protect the integrity of English Language scholarship. Future research should explore qualitative perspectives and consider diverse institutional contexts to gain a deeper understanding of these issues. Ultimately, this study advocates for collaborative efforts to support faculty, safeguard academic integrity, and strengthen Afghanistan's presence in global scholarship in the face of threats posed by predatory publishing.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, S., Sohail, M., Waris, A., Abdel-Magid, I. M., Pattukuthu, A., & Azad, M. S. (2019). Evaluating journal quality : A review of journal citation indicators and ranking in library and information science core journals. *COLLNET Journal of Scientometrics and Information Management*, 13(2), 345–363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09737766.2020.1718030>
- Akça, S., & Akbulut, M. (2021). Are predatory journals contaminating science? An analysis on the Cabells' Predatory Report. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 47(4), 102366. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102366>
- Association, A. P. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bagues, M., Sylos-Labini, M., & Zinovyeva, N. (2023). Does the publish-or-perish culture promote predatory publishing? *Research Policy*.
- Beall, J. (2013). Predatory publishing is just one of the consequences of gold open access. *Learned Publishing*, 26(2), 79–84. <https://doi.org/10.1087/20130203>
- Beall Jeffrey. (2012). Predatory Publishers are corrupting Open Access. *Nature*, 489, 179.
- Biber, D., & Gray, B. (2016). Grammatical Complexity in Academic English: Linguistic Change in Writing. *Cambridge University Press*, 277.
- Bretag, T. (2015). Handbook of Academic Integrity. *Handbook of Academic Integrity*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-079-7>
- Cobey, K. D., Lalu, M. M., Skidmore, B., Ahmadzai, N., Grudniewicz, A., & Moher, D. (2018a). What is a predatory journal? A scoping review. *F1000Research*, 7, 1001. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.15256.2>
- Cobey, K. D., Lalu, M. M., Skidmore, B., Ahmadzai, N., Grudniewicz, A., & Moher, D.

- (2018b). What is a predatory journal? A scoping review. *F1000Research*, 7, 1001. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.15256.2>
- Cress, P. E., & Sarwer, D. B. (2019). Predatory Journals: An Ethical Crisis in Publishing. *Aesthetic Surgery Journal Open Forum*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/asjof/ojz001>
- Creswell W. J. and Creswell J. D. (2014). Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Research Design Qualitative Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. In *Research Design* (Vol. 5, Issue June).
- D, Moher, D., L, S., K, C., Lalu M Galipeau JHutton, B., Isupov, I., Mcgrath, T. A., Mcinnes, M. D. F., Page, M. J., Thavorn, K., Katwyk, S. Van, Ward, R., Wolfe, D., & Yazdi, F. (2017). Stop this waste of people, animals and money. *Nature*, 549(7670), 23–25. <http://www.nature.com/news/stop-this-waste-of-people-animals-and-money-1.22554>
- Demir, S. B. (2018). Predatory journals: Who publishes in them and why? *Journal of Informetrics*, 12(4), 1296–1311. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joi.2018.10.008>
- Eve, M. P. (2015). Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies and the Future. *Online Information Review*, 39(5), 755–756. <https://doi.org/10.1108/oir-07-2015-0229>
- Godskesen, T., Eriksson, S., Oermann, M. H., & Gabrielsson, S. (2022). Predatory conferences: A systematic scoping review. *BMJ Open*, 12(11). <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-062425>
- Grudniewicz, A., Moher, D., Cobey, K. D., Bryson, G. L., Cukier, S., Allen, K., Ardern, C., Balcom, L., Barros, T., Berger, M., Ciro, J. B., Cugusi, L., Donaldson, M. R., Egger, M., Graham, I. D., Hodgkinson, M., Khan, K. M., Mabizela, M., Manca, A., ... Lalu, M. M. (2019). Predatory journals: no definition, no defence. *Nature*, 576(7786), 210–212. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-03759-y>
- ICAI. (2021). The Fundamental Values of of Academic Integrity. *International Center for Academic Integrity, ICAI*, 1, 17. https://academicintegrity.org/images/pdfs/20019_ICAI-Fundamental-Values_R12.pdf
- Kurniawan, Y. S., Priyanga, K. T. A., Krisbiantoro, P. A., & Imawan, A. C. (2021). Open access Open access. In *Journal of Multidisciplinary Applied Natural Science* (Vol. 1, Issue 1). MIT Press.
- Kurt, S. (2018). Why do authors publish in predatory journals? *Learned Publishing*, 31(2), 141–147. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1150>
- Lane, T., Consultant, E., Group, E., Mathew, S., Delivery, T. C., Writing, M., Vaccines, G., & Yun, C. (2018). *Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing | Committee on Publication Ethics: COPE*. July, 18–19. <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/guideline/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing%0Ahttp://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines-new/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing>
- Larivière, V., & Cassidy, R. S. (2019). The Journal Impact Factor: A Brief History, Critique, The Journal. *Springer*, 34(1), 3–24.

- Lee, I. (2014). Publish or perish: The myth and reality of academic publishing. *Language Teaching*, 47(2), 250–261. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000504>
- Macháček, V., & Srholec, M. (2021). RETRACTED ARTICLE: Predatory publishing in Scopus: evidence on cross-country differences. *Scientometrics*, 126(3), 1897–1921. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-020-03852-4>
- Masic, I. (2021). Predatory Journals and Publishers - Dilemmas: How to Assess it and How to Avoid it? *Medical Archives*, 75(5), 328. <https://doi.org/10.5455/medarh.2021.75.328-334>
- McCrostie, J. (2021). Predatory conferences: A growing problem for academia. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(3), 587–601.
- Memon, A. R. (2018). How to respond to and what to do for papers published in predatory journals? *Science Editing*, 5(2), 146–149. <https://doi.org/10.6087/kcse.140>
- Mitchell, P. (2008). The Politics of Open-Access Publishing: M/C Journal, Public Intellectualism, and Academic Discourses of Legitimacy. *M/C Journal*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.38>
- Panjikaran, L., & Mathew, A. (2020). Awareness of predatory publishing. *ESMO Open*, 5(2), e000677. <https://doi.org/10.1136/esmoopen-2020-000677>
- Rupp, M., Anastasopoulou, L., Wintermeyer, E., Malhaan, D., El Khassawna, T., & Heiss, C. (2019). Predatory journals: a major threat in orthopaedic research. *International Orthopaedics*, 43(3), 509–517. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00264-018-4179-1>
- Seema Rawat, & Sanjay Meena. (2014). Publish or perish: Where are we heading? *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*, 19(2), 87–89. <http://www.>
- Shamseer, L., Moher, D., Maduekwe, O., Turner, L., Barbour, V., Burch, R., Clark, J., Galipeau, J., Roberts, J., & Shea, B. J. (2017). Potential predatory and legitimate biomedical journals: Can you tell the difference? A cross-sectional comparison. *BMC Medicine*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-017-0785-9>
- Shehata, A. M. K., & Elgllab, M. F. M. (2018). Where Arab social science and humanities scholars choose to publish: Falling in the predatory journals trap. *Learned Publishing*, 31(3), 222–229. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1167>
- Shen, C., & Björk, B. C. (2015). “Predatory” open access: A longitudinal study of article volumes and market characteristics. *BMC Medicine*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-015-0469-2>
- Shrestha, J. (2021). Predatory journals as threats to the academic publishing: a review. *Journal of Agriculture and Natural Resources*, 4(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3126/janr.v4i2.33640>
- Strinzel, M., Severin, A., Milzow, K., & Egger, M. (2022). Correction for Strinzel et al., “Blacklists and Whitelists To Tackle Predatory Publishing: a Cross-Sectional Comparison and Thematic Analysis.” *MBio*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.1128/mbio.01305-22>

Xia, J., Harmon, J. L., Connolly, K. G., Donnelly, R. M., Anderson, M. R., & Howard, H. A. (2015). Who publishes in “predatory” journals? *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 66(7), 1406–1417.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23265>