

Predatory and papermill practices in a new journal published by a new publisher – A case study involving a journal with links towards Turkey, Pakistan and Iran

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Background: Triggered by a case of identity theft in which 4 KU Leuven authors found their names listed as the sole authors on a paper they did not write, I decided to have a closer look at the journal and its other publications. A first analysis identified several questionable practices within the organization of the journal. In addition, a check of a limited number of articles suggested there could be plagiarism within a large portion of the content published by the journal. In order to learn more about the modus operandi of this likely predatory journal, I decided to analyse the journal, its content and its publisher in a structured way.

Methodology: The information on the journal's website was analyzed by comparing its current content against previous versions accessible via the Internet Archive. In a complementary approach, the articles published by the journal were analysed using plagiarism detection software and reverse searches looking for specific phrases. Finally Open Alex was used to check how the work was cited.

Results: I will present a qualitative and quantitative overview of my findings with regards to the journal, its publisher and the articles they publish. I will, among others, illustrate the ease in which the journal switches publishers and engages in unacceptable practices such as the unlawful listing of researchers as members of the editorial board. I will show that content is backdated to make it appear published at an earlier date. I will present my analysis of the individual papers demonstrating identity theft, plagiarism, and a skewed distribution of the citations towards the work.

Conclusion: It appears fake papers are generated to provide content for the journal, potentially to make the journal appear trustworthy. Researchers need to be aware there is a high likelihood that few to none of the papers in this journal/by this publisher are to be trusted. Given that this case is only one of many, together with the fact that maleficent journals will become better at evading detection, it is of utmost importance to get a better understanding on how these papermilling, predatory journals work.

Keywords: Identity theft, plagiarism, misconduct, papermill, predatory publishing