

Cognizance and Vigilance: A Study on the Awareness of Cloned Journals in Dental Research Publication among Professionals

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Abstract:

Background: The research world all over is currently facing incongruous threat that includes paid publishers and fake journals.

Material and Methods:

Descriptive cross-sectional study was designed which consisted of an online structured survey. Ethical clearance was obtained from institutional ethical board. Survey was sent to around 650 dental professionals selected by simple random sampling in order to investigate the knowledge and awareness about cloned journals for research publication among dental professionals in Maharashtra. The results were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS 15 software and percentage wise distribution of the responses to various questions were used.

Results: Total 600 dentist responded to the survey questionnaire circulated online in which 319 (53.16 %) were female and 281 (46.8%) were male. In our study total number of publications in indexed journal (Pub med, Scopus, web of science, UGC care list) were 237 (39.6%). 363 (60.4%) publications were done in non-indexed journal. 234 (39 %) authors have come across such publication in cloned indexing journal.

Conclusion: Our study concludes there is need to create awareness amongst dental professionals regarding cloned journals and fraudulent publishers.

Keywords: Cloned journal, Cybercrime, Predatory publishers, Research, scholarly publishing, Dentistry.

Introduction:

The research world all over is currently facing incongruous threat that includes paid publishers and fake journals. These journals are also called as ‘hijacked journals’ or ‘cloned journals’.^[1] These predatory publishers encourage authors to publish their research work in unreliable peer reviewed journal for a price.^[2] It is recent phenomenon of even more malicious fraud that has broken into the realm of the academic world.^[3] These cloned journals web pages are spurious mirror image of reputable authentic journals that exploit the Title, ISSN number, Domain name of legitimate journals.^[4] In such journals acceptance of paper is early and at minimum cost with fast-track publication due to which many authors fall prey. These cloned journals receive more attention as they claim to have earned high impact factor from reputable indexing sources like Web of science and Scopus. The main apprehension regarding this new trend is that unreviewed manuscripts that are published on these clone websites may become sources of medical practice and health policy and might be incorporated into systematic reviews on the clinical literature.^[5] The council of science editors has suggested some cautionary red flags with the aim of

educating the worldwide scholarly publishing community before sending manuscript submissions.^[6] According to their guidelines authors need to be aware of the following, regarding clone journals: False claims to be members of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA); False declarations of indexation in databases such as SCOPUS and Web of Science (WOS); Manuscript publication charges that are not visible; Non-transparency of the peer-review process, with unrealistically short peer review-to-publication turnaround times (e.g. one week); Non-existent publisher contact details: fake publishers do not have authentic postal addresses or any active telephone number; and Counterfeit publishers have small numbers of articles per year but have enormous editorial boards, or vice versa.^[7] The purpose of this study is to inform and warn academics about practices used by cybercriminals who seek to profit from unwary scholars and undermine the industry of research science. Hence to assess the knowledge and awareness about cloned journals for research publication among dental professionals across Maharashtra state, India this study was conducted.

Materials and Methods:

Descriptive cross-sectional study was designed which consisted of an online structured survey composed as per the Helsinki declaration. (World Medical Association, 2013). After obtaining institutional ethical clearance this study was conducted. It was sent to 650 dental professionals located in Maharashtra and were selected by simple random, purposive sampling in order to study the knowledge and awareness about cloned journals for research publication. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before data collection and participation was voluntary. Survey questionnaire was developed and validated by two independent external dentists who are involved in research activity and have at least 50 publications. The questioner was sent to all dentists using Google forms link and sent via email. 600 participants response was reported. No personal information was obtained in the form to maintain the complete anonymity. All responses obtained from the participants were saved with access only to primary author. The Google form included brief description of the study followed by formal consent statement for participating dental professionals. The language of questionnaire was English and it took approximately 4-5minutes for completion and submission. The results were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS 15 software and percentage wise distribution of the responses to various questions was used.

Results:

Total 600 dentist responded to the survey questionnaire circulated online in which 319 (53.16 %) were female and 281 (46.8%) were male. The age group ranged from 21- 60 years, where maximum participants 243 (40.5%) belong to 31- 40 years age group. (Table 1) Total of 105 (17.5%) participants were BDS graduate, 176 (29.3%) were post graduate students pursuing MDS, 317 (52.8%) were MDS while 02 (0.4%) students were pursuing PhD. (Figure 1) In our study total number of publications in indexed journal (Pub med, Scopus, web of science, UGC care list) were 237 (39.6%) out of which 15 participants had more than 10 publications to their credit while most of them 222 had less than 10 publications. 363 (60.4%) publications were done in non-indexed journal. (Table 2) Awareness and knowledge-based questions were included as in Table 3.

Table 1: Age and Gender wise distribution

Age range (years)	Gender (n)		Total n (%)
	Female	Male	
21-30	92	80	172 (28.6%)
31-40	145	98	243 (40.5%)
41-50	55	69	124 (20.6%)
51-60	27	34	61 (10.1%)
Total:	319 (53.16 %)	281 (46.8%)	600 (100%)

Table 2: Total number of publications

Publications in indexed journal (PubMed, Scopus, web of science, UGC care list)			Publications in non-Indexed journal		
More than 10 publications (n)	Less than 10 publications (n)	Total n (%)	More than 10 publications (n)	Less than 10 publications (n)	Total n (%)
15	222	237 (39.6%)	59	304	363 (60.4%)

Figure 1: Qualification wise distribution

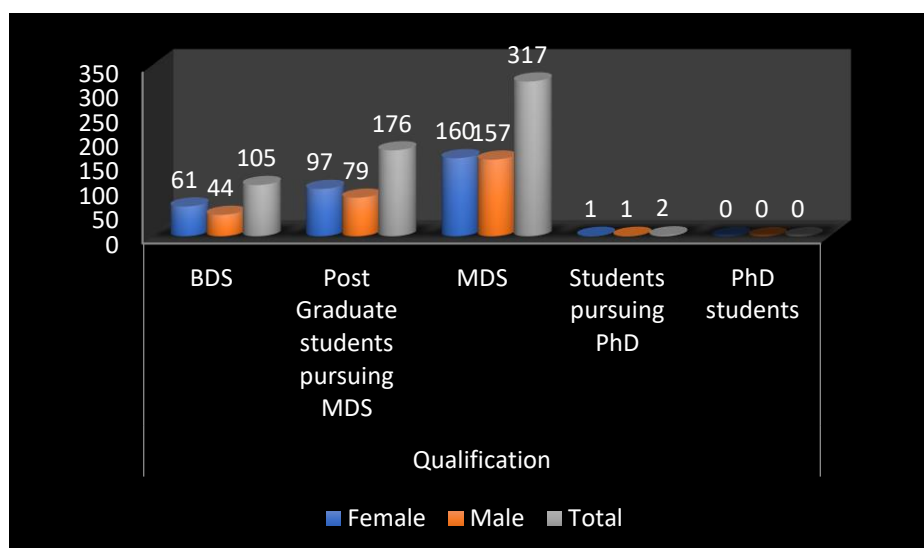


Table 3: Awareness and Knowledge based questions

Awareness Based Questions		YES n (%)	NO n (%)
Are you aware of term cloned /hijacked journal?		315 (52.5%)	285 (47.5 %)
Have you checked legitimate journal website before publication?		252 (42 %)	348 (58 %)
Have you come across publication in cloned journal?		234 (39 %)	366 (61 %)
Are you aware of any website where you can get list of such cloned journal?		162 (27 %)	438 (73 %)
Do you think such cloned / hijacked journal possess threat to research world?		525 (87.5 %)	75 (12.5 %)
Should strict regulations be imposed on publishers of cloned journals?		588 (98 %)	12 (2 %)
Knowledge Based Questions			
Cloned journal exploits following: a. Title, b. ISSN number c. all of the above d. none of the above	Correct answer:	Incorrect answer	
	404 (67.6%)	196 (32.4%)	
How will you assess the reliability of the journal in which you will be sending your valuable research work?	1.From journal website	452 (75.3%)	
	2. From editor	110 (18.33%)	
	3.From colleague /friend	38 (6.3%)	

Discussion:

This study assessed knowledge and awareness about cloned journals for research publication among dental professionals in Maharashtra state, India. 600 dentists responded to the survey questionnaire circulated online in which 319 (53.16 %) were female and 281 (46.8%) were male. Out of them 317 (52.8%) were MDS graduates and 176 (29.3%) were post graduate students pursuing MDS. Maximum participation was from MDS graduates. This may be due to the fact that MDS graduates are exposed more to research world during their training period and also most of them are associated with academic teaching where research publication plays an important role as per governing body regulations for promotion purpose.^[8,9] In our study total number of publications in indexed journal (Pub med, Scopus, web of science, UGC care list) were 237 (39.6%) and 363 (60.4%) publications were done in non-indexed journal. This difference in number o publication in indexed and non-indexed journal can be attributed to the fact that participants are not fully aware of standardised indexing as described by the governing bodies and also for academic purpose there should be uniformity in indexing criteria requirement for publication by Dental Council of India (DCI) , NIRF, NAAC, University Grant Commission (UGC).^[10,11] Total of 315 (52.5%) participants were aware of the term cloned /hijacked journal and 285 (47.5 %) were not aware. 348 (58 %) do not check indexing of journal on legitimate website before sending their valuable research work for publication in

journal. 452 (75.3%) participants from our study report to have knowledge to assess the reliability of the journal in which they will be sending valuable research work through website but 438 (73 %) participants were unaware of any such website where they can get list of such cloned journal. UGC's official website has displayed such list on their homepage. ^[12-14] <https://ugccare.unipune.ac.in/apps1/home/index>. PubMed has list of journals registered under NLM catalogue. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK3799/#catalog.Searching_for_journals_in_NLM__3, Also Scopus has separate page dedicated to list of journals: <https://www.scopus.com/home.uri>. All web of science indexed journals can be accessed and verified through their link. <https://mjl.clarivate.com/search-results>.

Not all authors are aware of all platforms to identify the authenticity of publisher and journal as our study reports 234 (39 %) authors have come across such publication in cloned indexing journal. Cloned publishers take advantage of these system loop holes and unawareness of authors and target them via email by sending invitation of call for paper. ^[15,16] In our study 525 (87.5 %) participants believe such cloned / hijacked journal possess threat to research world and 588 (98 %) participants from our study believe strict regulations should be imposed on publishers of cloned journals. ^[14]

Conclusion:

Our study concludes there is need to create awareness amongst dental professionals regarding cloned journals and fraudulent publishers. Methods to curb these cybercrimes include educating research scholars and students about tactics used by predatory publishers via various seminars, institutional changes in how faculty are evaluated using publications, reporting these consumer fraud crimes to the concern authorities. Unless scholars worldwide are willing to report these crimes and guard against citing bad science, our recent history of scientific productivity will regress into a new Dark Ages. To turn the tide, anyone who is defrauded or solicited for fraud should report it to the authorities. This is an international problem that requires an international solution.

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