




Study of the Causes and Consequences of Cloned Journal Publications

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Abstract

Cloned journals develop a mirror image of reputed journals and attract more articles than predatory journals. Journal of Positive School Psychology (JPSP) is one such Scopus indexed journal that has been cloned and used as a case study for this article. JPSP (cloned journal) has published over 3,000 articles in its last four issues (2nd to 5th) of 2022. Volume 6 No.2 (2022) is of 6,302 pages, Volume 6 No.3 (2022) is of 10,210 pages, Volume 6 No.4 (2022) is of 11,881 pages, and Volume 6 No.5 (2022) is of 4,335 pages. While the Society of Psychology and Education publishes the genuine JPSP journal, its cloned version is published by ASR Research India. We surveyed cloned JPSP authors worldwide, 512 to be precise, to investigate the causes and consequences of cloned journal publications. Pressure to publish articles in Scopus indexed journals, quick publication, ease in publication, and difficulty detecting a cloned journal, are some of the multiple causes that have led authors to publish in the cloned journals. It was interesting to note that despite the JPSP authors knowing that they have published in a cloned journal and its consequences, they wish to take the publication forward and earn academic credits. Suggestions have been offered to curb such publications.

Keywords Cloned journal · Journal of Positive School Psychology · Scopus · Academic credit

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Introduction

The rapid growth of fake and predatory journals has seriously threatened the academic community [1]. Promotion in academics, incentives for publication, and the pressure stemming from the “publish or perish” policy are some important causes that lead authors to publish in fake and predatory journals [2]. However, there is a difference between a predatory journal and a clone or a cloned journal. While predatory journals use a fake title in their publication, a cloned journal uses the same title as a reputed journal and shows the same International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) on its website [3]. Cloned journals develop a mirror image of reputed journals and attract more articles than predatory journals [4]. The menace of predatory and cloned journals has sharply risen post-pandemic [5]. Compared to predatory journals, it is difficult to identify cloned journals [6]. Another term used for cloned journals is “hijacked journals.” Hijacked journals are fake or duplicate websites of genuine journals using the title, ISSN, and other information of the genuine journal [7]. Fake journals and even fake conferences have penetrated academic integrity [8].

Given the sporadic rise in research paper publications during the times of COVID-19 and after the pandemic [9–13], this study investigates the causes and consequences of publication in cloned journals taking the case of Journal of Positive School Psychology (JPSP), which is a cloned journal. JPSP (cloned journal) has published over 3,000 articles in its last four issues (2nd to 5th) of 2022. JPSP (cloned) had been publishing a modest number of around 100 pages and ten articles per issue till its Volume 6 No.1 [14]. However, we see a major increase in the pages and the articles published from the Volume 6 No.2 issue. Volume 6 No.2 (2022) has published 600 articles (6,302 pages), Volume 6 No.3 (2022) has published 972 articles (10,210 pages), Volume 6 No.4 (2022) has published a record 1,131 articles (11,881 pages), and Volume 6 No.5 (2022) has added another 413 articles (4,335 pages) [14]. At the time of writing this paper, the sixth issue of Volume 6 was under publication. The number of listed articles for the Volume 6 No.6 as of 15th June 2022 was 94 (Authors have calculated an average of 10.50 pages per article based on Volume 6 No.5 (2022) and have used this average consistently for other issues also.) Such weird numbers of pages and articles per issues are a solid proof that the journal is a cloned one. The Indian apex body University Grants Commission on its website of UGC Journals has listed other cloned journals like Gedrag and Organisatie Review, GIS Science Journal, Gorteria Journal, Gradiva Review Journal, High Technology Letters, Innovations, Journal of Natural Remedies and some more [44]. Such journals follow more or less the same practices as adopted by JPSP.

To give readers a direct and instant feel of the cloning, we reproduce a few screen-shots of the cloned JPSP journal, as accessed from its website <https://journalppw.com/>.

Figure 1 has the Home screen of the cloned journal highlighting its Scopus and EBSCO indexation. At the same time, its inconsistency can also be seen from slightly careful observation. On the one hand, it mentions that its frequency is monthly, while the black box states that it is published only twice a year.

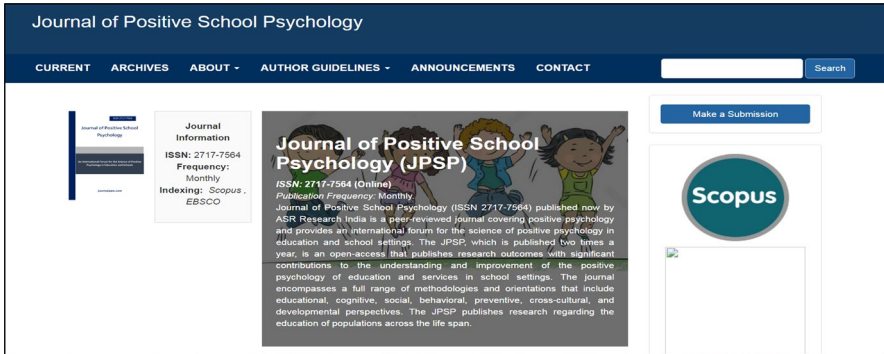


Fig. 1 The Home screen of JPSP (cloned) journal. (Source: Journal of Positive School Psychology (Cloned), 2022)

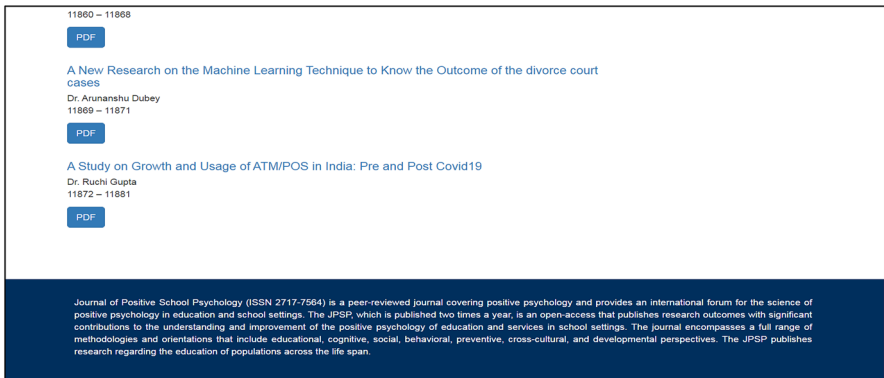


Fig. 2 Volume 6 No.5 issue of JPSP (cloned) journal. (Source: Journal of Positive School Psychology (Cloned), 2022)

Figure 2 shows the bottom of the volume 6 No.5 issue of the JPSP (cloned) journal listing, and one can see that the last article has page numbers 11872–11,881. It is also stated that JPSP publishes articles on the science of positive psychology in education and school settings. But the last two articles, as seen in Fig. 2, have titles that have nothing to do with the stated scope of the journal. Most of its published articles are unrelated to the science of positive psychology in education and school settings. All these are glaring evidence of the fakeness of the cloned JPSP journal.

We also checked the Scopus indexation of the genuine journal [15]. The journal's name and ISSN number have been copied exactly by the cloned journal. However, while the Scopus index information shows an E-ISSN number for the genuine journal, the cloned JPSP journal has an ISSN number (as seen in Figs. 1 and 2). The Society of Psychology and Education publishes the genuine JPSP journal, and its cloned version is published by ASR Research India (as seen from Fig. 1). Researchers generally verify the title and the ISSN and get deceived by the similarity. They

miss out on minute differences like the E-ISSN number of the genuine journal and an ISSN number of the cloned journal.

The significance of this study is on multiple counts. One is that cloned journals are quite difficult to identify as they closely imitate almost everything of a journal of repute. Secondly, the magnitude of the article published in cloned journals is phenomenal. Third, the requirement of research publication for academicians continues to be more demanding. Fourth the number of publications during the COVID-19 period and after the pandemic has risen sharply compared to the pre-COVID period. In the light of these developments, the authors of this article felt that an in-depth study should be carried out based on sizable empirical evidence from authors of cloned journal publications to understand the causes and consequences of cloned journal publications. Two research questions were set for the study:

RQ1 What factors (causes) lead authors to cloned journal publications?

RQ2 Are authors aware of the consequences of cloned journal publications?

Literature Review

Literature related to predatory/fake and cloned journals was reviewed.

Predatory publishing has become an organized industry [16]. In addition to fake journals there are now fake conferences too [8]. The highest contributions to fake journals come from India, followed by Nigeria and Turkey [2]. Questionable publications inflate their citation impact by attributing publisher-level self-citations, thereby making it difficult to detect by conventional journal metrics [17].

Publishing in predatory/fake journals is sometimes due to maintaining a sense of self-efficacy in the light of non-acceptance by more highly ranked journals. A term "shadow academia" has been used [18]. Publications in cloned journals find a place in the systematic reviews on the clinical literature. Their un-reviewed outcomes become sources for developing novel hypotheses. These can be considered a severe threat to the validity and reliability of future medical research [19].

Cybercriminals engaged in cloned journals are developing new journals every day, targeting increasing numbers of authors who might be unaware of this threat [20]. Bohannon [21] has written that in the cyber world, stealing web domains is known as "web swooping."

Measures are proposed to protect junior or unwary authors from predatory journals and publishers whose main purpose is to exploit such writers and institutions by collecting the cost of processing articles [22]. Patwardhan [23] has claimed that the Indian apex agency University Grants Commission (UGC), has removed around 4,000 predatory journal titles from its recognized journals database. It is only a matter of time before unwary scholars from Europe and North America become entangled in such journals [24].

Erfanmanesh and Pourhossein [25] have highlighted the contribution of authors from Iran to the predatory journals and found that Iran is the second-largest contributor to predatory journals after India. The recent sporadic rise in predatory

journals has adversely impacted the quality of publications [26]. Academic journals have been adversely affected by fake impact factors used by predatory journals [27]. Papers of such journals may have incorrect conclusions and thus hamper scientific progress [28]. Due to the rise in Open Access journals, publishers have started exploiting the model of paid publications [29].

Xia [30] has analyzed select open access journal indexes provided by non-mainstream index suppliers. The author observed that predatory journals mostly use such indexes. Kendall and Linacre [31], revisiting Beall's list, posited that the rise in the number of publishing journals by few publishers suggests the problem of predatory journals is getting worse. Authors deviating from the Beall's way of classifying the journals as predatory or non-predatory have grouped the journals into four categories (the first category indicates the most reputed journals). Nnaji [32] has scrutinized predatory publications in the form of books, journals, monographs, and conference proceedings, as these publications badly hurt the quality of scholarship [32]. Predatory journals chase authors for the publication of articles. Such journals misled writers by showing popular authors and editors. Junior writers can be relatively easily misled into writing for predatory journals [33]. Trust is the cornerstone of publishing related to the traditional science domain. However, trust has been largely compromised due to the emergence of predatory journals. Such journals have resulted in significant distrust in academic publishing [34]. Pandita and Singh [35] have analyzed the exponential growth of open-access journals worldwide. A rapid increase in research journals provides opportunities to launch sub-standard quality, fake, dubious, and predatory journals. Teixeira da Silva [36] has evaluated the sting operations carried out to test fake and predatory journals. Concerns about the rise in open access journals that collect author publication charges (APC) have been expressed. Such practices create a breeding ground for fake and predatory journals. Such journals help paid authors get quick publication without much scrutiny [37]. Teixeira da Silva [38] explained the term "snub publishing" coined in 2013. In snub publishing, authors use predatory publishing to misrepresent other authors. Guidance has been given for the identification of high-quality journals and publishers so that writers are saved from falling prey to predatory journals [39].

Most of the studies have researched fake or predatory journals. There are very few studies that have studied cloned journals. India has been at the forefront regarding its contribution to predatory and cloned journals [2, 25]. However, no major study investigating the substantial Indian contribution to cloned journals is on record. The cloned journal selected for this study, JPSP, has many Indian authors. Authors like Mahesar [6] have stated that cloned journals attract more authors than predatory journals due to their huge similarity with a journal of repute.

Taking due cognizance of the difference between a cloned and a predatory journal, we hypothesize as under:

H1 There are multiple causes for writers publishing their work in cloned journals, and

H2 Writers are aware of the consequences of publication in a cloned journal.

Methodology

Primary data for the study was collected from the authors of the cloned JPSP journal. Most of the mega-article issues of the cloned JPSP journal are open access, and the articles have email ids of the corresponding and other authors. At a 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval for a fairly large population of, say, 20,000, the sample size as per standard sample size tables like Krejcie and Morgan [40] works out to be 377. This was rounded off to 400 to accommodate a much larger population and take care of sampling errors. The survey questionnaire was prepared in Google Forms and was mailed to around 800 authors of the cloned JPSP journal. These 800 authors were selected starting from the cloned JPSP journals volume 6 no. 5 and then moving to volume 6 no. 4 and volume 6 no. 3. The authors were informed with necessary evidence that the JPSP journal in which they have published their article is cloned. The evidence forwarded included the abnormal high page numbers and number of articles that have been published in the last four issues of the journal, the discrepancy in the publisher as per the Scopus index and as mentioned on the website of the cloned journal, disguised article publication charges, and the discrepancy in the frequency of issues. The authors were also urged to verify the details of the editorial board, which we found to be bogus.

The survey questionnaire was divided into three sections – profile information, causes for publication in the cloned JPSP journal, and awareness of the consequences of the cloned journal publication. The profile information section had nine questions, while the cause and consequences sections had ten questions. The ten-cause list was grounded largely on available literature (Promotion in academics, incentives for publication, and the pressure stemming from the “publish or perish” policy, [2]; fear of rejection in genuine journals, [18]; lack of awareness, [20]).

Similarly, a ten-statement list also formed part of the questionnaire to assess the awareness of the consequences of cloned journal publications. The ten items were largely grounded on available literature (such cloned journal articles get cited in further research, [19]; cloned journals are a major threat to academic integrity, [25]; these journals severely impact the quality of publication, [26]; papers of such journals may have incorrect conclusions and thus hamper scientific progress, Taylor [28]). Proforma of the questionnaire is given in Table 1.

Responses were sought on a five-point Likert scale. The response options were – Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, and Strongly agree.

The survey was hosted through Google Forms. Five hundred twelve responses were received over one week of June 2022 and indicated a response rate of 64% (512/800).

The responses survey questionnaire was passed through a validation checklist suggested by Brown et al. [42], and the results were satisfactory. Additionally, a reliability test was applied to each section of the survey questionnaire and the overall questionnaire. This was done by using the well-accepted Cronbach alpha test of reliability. The scores were 0.821 for section I-causes, 0.833 for section

Table 1 Proforma of questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

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PROFILE INFORMATION

- 1 Gender (Male, Female)
- 2 Age (< 30 years, 30–39 years, 40–49 years, > = 50 years)
- 3 Region (India, Asia other than India, Europe, Americas, Rest of the world)
- 4 Occupation (Full-time doctoral research, Faculty, Faculty and researcher, Other)
- 5 Research experience (< 5 years, 5–10 years, 11–15 years, > 15 years)
- 6 Mode of publication (Through agent, Direct)
- 7 Authenticity check prior publication (No, Yes)
- 8 Funding support (Yes, No)
- 9 Action on cloned publication (Proceed to earn academic credits, Withdraw the article, Complain to the concerned authorities, None of the above)

I. Causes for publication in Cloned Journals

Rate the following statements on a scale of Somewhat Agree, Strongly Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree

| <i>No</i> | <i>Statement</i> | <i>Response</i> |
|-----------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Promotion in academics | |
| 2 | Incentives for publication | |
| 3 | Pressure of “publish or perish” policy | |
| 4 | Lack of awareness | |
| 5 | Fear of rejection by genuine journals | |
| 6 | Attraction of a Scopus indexed publication | |
| 7 | Quick turnaround from submission to publication | |
| 8 | Convenience due to lack of editorial rigor | |
| 9 | Attraction of open access at a low cost | |
| 10 | Support from publication agents | |

II. Awareness of consequences of Cloned Journals

Rate the following statements on a scale of Somewhat Agree, Strongly Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree

| <i>No</i> | <i>Statement</i> | <i>Response</i> |
|-----------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Cloned journal articles severely impact overall quality of publication | |
| 2 | Such papers have incorrect conclusions and thus hamper scientific progress | |
| 3 | Cloned journals threaten academic integrity | |
| 4 | Such sub-standard quality articles get cited in further research | |
| 5 | Cloned journal articles effectively do not help in any way the writers | |
| 6 | Such journal publications is a waste of time, and money | |
| 7 | Detection at a later stage can jeopardize career advances made by the writers | |
| 8 | Publications in cloned journals can hurt the reputation of the writers | |
| 9 | If by chance, they get accepted for academic credits, they would wrongly motivate other writers | |
| 10 | Cloned journal publications cause injustice to genuine journal writers | |

II-consequences, and 0.892 for the overall survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was considered reliable because all the scores were above the threshold of 0.70.

The data set of the 512 responses has been deposited with a repository and is available at <https://www.openicpsr.org/openicpsr/project/172981/version/V1/view>.

Methodology to test the hypotheses was as adopted by Kumar et al. [43]. The responses for each section were aggregated under two opposite groups of agreeing and disagreeing. While doing so for each extreme response, a weight of 2 was assigned to the strongly agree and strongly disagree responses to distinguish them from the somewhat agree and somewhat disagree responses, respectively. The “neither agree nor disagree” responses were ignored in the calculations by assigning zero weight. For each sub-question, an average count was calculated for the two opposite opinions of agreeing and disagreeing. A comparison was made to determine which of the two groups had a higher score than the other, agreeing or disagreeing. The higher average score percentage for each section, referred to as the Likert Scale [41], was then compared with a hypothesized mean of the population of 50% agreement/disagreement score connoting an event by chance and not due to statistical significance. A t-test was used, which is usually the case where the population’s standard deviation is unknown.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of Profile Characteristics of the Sample

The profile characteristics of the sample ($n = 512$) are given in Table 2.

Female authors, 54 percent, were higher than their male counterparts by 8 percent, who were 46 percent of the sample. Forty-six percent of the respondents were < 30 years of age, 22 percent were in the age-group 30–39, 27 percent in the age-group 40–49, and 4 percent belonged to the age group ≥ 50 years. A majority of the writers were relatively young. Forty-nine percent of the respondents were from India, 38 percent were from Asia other than India (Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, and others), 7 percent were from European nations, 4 percent were from the Americas, and the balance 2 percent were from other nations. A sizable majority of the respondents (49 percent + 38 percent = 87 percent) were from India and other Asian nations. Eight percent of the respondents were full-time researchers, 46 percent were faculty members, 42 percent were faculty and pursuing a doctorate, and 4 percent occupied other positions. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents had a research experience of < 5 years, 24 percent had research experience of 5–10 years, 13 percent had research experience of 11–15 years, and a balance of 4 percent had research experience of > 15 years. The respondents, on an overall basis, had a relatively lesser research experience. As many as 78 percent of the respondents had approached the cloned JPSP journal through publication agents, while 22 percent approached directly. A sizable majority, 84 percent of the respondents, had not carried any authenticity check before publication, and only 16 percent had checked the journal’s authenticity before publishing. Sixty-one percent of the respondents had secured funding for their article publication, whereas 39

Table 2 Profile characteristics of the sample

| Sr. No | Variable | Options | Count | Percentage |
|--------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|------------|
| 1 | Gender | Male | 235 | 46% |
| | | Female | 277 | 54% |
| 2 | Age | < 30 years | 237 | 46% |
| | | 30–39 years | 115 | 22% |
| | | 40–49 years | 140 | 27% |
| | | > = 50 years | 20 | 4% |
| 3 | Region | India | 249 | 49% |
| | | Asia other than India | 193 | 38% |
| | | Europe | 38 | 7% |
| | | Americas | 21 | 4% |
| 4 | Occupation | Rest of the world | 11 | 2% |
| | | Full-time Doctoral Researcher | 40 | 8% |
| | | Faculty | 236 | 46% |
| | | Faculty and Doctoral Researcher | 213 | 42% |
| 5 | Research experience | Other | 23 | 4% |
| | | < 5 years | 301 | 59% |
| | | 5–10 years | 123 | 24% |
| | | 11–15 years | 68 | 13% |
| 6 | Mode of publication | > 15 years | 20 | 4% |
| | | Through publication agent | 397 | 78% |
| 7 | Authenticity check | Direct | 115 | 22% |
| | | No | 428 | 84% |
| 8 | Funding support | Yes | 84 | 16% |
| | | No | 313 | 61% |
| 9 | Action on cloned publication | Yes | 199 | 39% |
| | | Proceed to earn academic credits | 421 | 82% |
| | | Withdraw the article | 27 | 5% |
| | | Complain to concerned authorities | 59 | 12% |
| | | None of the above | 5 | 1% |

(Source: Authors primary data)

percent had not secured any funding. A vast majority of the respondents, 82 percent, had decided to proceed with cloned article publication to earn normal academic credits, 5 percent stated that they would withdraw their article from the cloned journal, 12 percent said that they would complain to the concerned authorities about the cloned journal, and remaining 1 percent replied that they would take action other than the given three options.

Table 3 Plain-count summary of 512 responses to the survey questionnaires cause section

| Responses | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 1.10 |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Strongly disagree | 90 | 65 | 67 | 39 | 83 | 53 | 61 | 41 | 35 | 47 |
| Somewhat disagree | 44 | 39 | 45 | 36 | 35 | 37 | 38 | 43 | 34 | 37 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16 | 16 | 20 | 21 | 23 | 17 | 13 | 12 | 17 | 22 |
| Somewhat agree | 179 | 189 | 194 | 208 | 185 | 208 | 203 | 206 | 215 | 200 |
| Strongly agree | 183 | 203 | 186 | 208 | 186 | 197 | 197 | 210 | 211 | 206 |
| Total | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 |

(Source: Authors primary data)

Table 4 Plain-count summary of 512 responses to the survey questionnaires consequences section

| Responses | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.10 |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Strongly disagree | 46 | 96 | 47 | 34 | 77 | 47 | 51 | 38 | 36 | 52 |
| Somewhat disagree | 54 | 41 | 55 | 47 | 40 | 53 | 45 | 53 | 36 | 50 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 29 | 21 | 27 | 26 | 36 | 25 | 25 | 22 | 27 | 34 |
| Somewhat agree | 197 | 194 | 202 | 220 | 181 | 208 | 208 | 207 | 221 | 186 |
| Strongly agree | 186 | 160 | 181 | 185 | 178 | 179 | 183 | 192 | 192 | 190 |
| Total | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 | 512 |

(Source: Authors primary data)

Table 5 Testing of the two hypotheses

| Parameter | H1 | H2 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Average = Ho (Sample mean) | 79% | 79% |
| SD (Standard Deviation) | 1.31 | 1.29 |
| H1 (Hypothesized mean of population) | 50% | 50% |
| n (Sample Size) | 512 | 512 |
| t-value $(Ho-H1) / ((SD) / \sqrt{n})$ | 5.06 | 5.07 |
| p-value | <0.0001 | <0.0001 |
| Decision | Reject null | Reject null |

(Source: Primary data calculations)

Testing of the Two Hypotheses

Tables 3 and 4 gives a plain-count summary of responses to the ten-cause and ten-consequences section of the questionnaire.

The weighted response count and percentages bifurcated in two opposite groups of agreeing and disagreeing were calculated after weight of 2 was applied to both strongly disagree and strongly agree responses. The ten agreeing and disagreeing percentages for the causes and consequences were further averaged. The average agreeing percentage was 79%, while the average disagreeing

percentage was 21%. The higher of the two, the agreeing percentage of 79% compared with a hypothesized population mean of 50% agreement, connoting an agreement by chance, and the hypotheses were tested at a 95% confidence level. These calculations are given in Table 5.

The two null hypotheses—there are no multiple causes for writers publishing their work in cloned journals, and writers are not aware of the consequences of publication in a cloned journal, were rejected in favor of the respective alternatives ($p \leq 0.0001$).

Discussion

Testing of the first hypothesis shows that there are multiple causes for writers doing a cloned journal publication. All the ten causes in the survey questionnaire fetched a sizable agreement percentage from the cloned JPSP journal writers. While the highest agreement percentage was for the cause—attraction of open access at a low cost (86%), the lowest agreement percentage was for the cause—of promotion in academics (71%). The average agreement for the ten causes is 79% which is a substantial agreement. Notably, none of the ten causes fetched an agreement of <70%, the lowest agreement being as high as 71%. We do not weigh much the individual causes as these are Likert items. On the other hand, we go by the Likert scale of ten-cause Likert items and draw inferences based on the average of 79% [41]. This agreement is statistically significant and is far higher than a random or by chance agreement of 50%.

Testing the second hypothesis shows that authors of the cloned JPSP journal are well aware of the consequences of their cloned publications. All the ten consequences in the survey questionnaire fetched a sizable awareness agreement percentage from the cloned JPSP journal writers. While the highest agreement percentage was for the consequence—if by chance, they get accepted for academic credits, they would wrongly motivate other writers (85%), the lowest agreement percentage was for the consequence – such papers have incorrect conclusions and thus hamper scientific progress (69%). The average agreement for awareness of the ten consequences is 79% which is a substantial agreement. What is striking is that despite a high-level awareness of the consequences, most writers will go ahead with claiming academic credits based on the cloned publication. This can be called a reckless and insensitive decision by the cloned JPSP journal writers.

Conclusion

Causes ranging from academic promotions to support from publication agents are leading many authors, particularly from India and other Asian countries, to publish in cloned journals. That the causes are multiple suggests that a comprehensive action plan is required to stop the menace of cloned publications. Actions are required in several areas. Educational institutions should demand a declaration from the authors that they have scrupulously checked the credentials of the journal and

publisher and that the publication is not in a predatory or cloned journal. The declaration should contain a statement saying that if the publication is found to be in a fake journal, not only will the author be stripped of the academic benefits, but he or she will be punished with penalties like suspension from a job for a period of say six months. The educational institutions should assume more responsibility for preventing cloned publications. An example of such action is a declaration of a list of cloned and predatory journals at the institutional level. In India, the apex agency UGC [44] has taken this initiative and has listed cloned journals on its website.

It is surprising to note that despite being well-aware of the grave and adverse consequences that cloned publications can have, writers are insensitive and indifferent when it comes to dealing with their cloned publications. Academic integrity and ethics do not matter much to the authors. Writers should exercise due diligence while publishing articles in a journal. They must carefully check the title, ISSN, publisher, Editorial Board, and other such details. They should avoid publications through agents. The journal's website should be carefully examined to ascertain things like the scope of the journal and the frequency of publication. Peer-reviewed and Scopus-indexed journals do not publish articles in tons in one single issue. If they come across a case like the cloned JPSP journal, which has a single issue with more than 10,000 pages and 1,000 pages, they should immediately understand that it is a cloned journal. If they end up publishing in a cloned journal despite exercising due care, they should immediately withdraw their articles and even lodge a formal complaint with concerned authorities.

The role of central education agencies is also important. Instead of merely listing the cloned journals on their website, they should take strict actions against the predators and owners of the cloned publications. Doing publications through a cloned journal like the JPSP is a straightforward deception and hence illegal.

Implications of our study are for all stakeholders—the writers, the educational institutions, and the apex agencies. Writers should act more ethically and responsibly. Educational institutions and the apex agencies should deal with the situation firmly. They should act and do their best to get rid of cloned journals by enforcing strict punishments for the predators. Mere displaying the lists of cloned journals does not solve the problem. More effective actions like punishments are required. The implications of our study are not limited to developing or under-developed nations. The threat of cloned journals is more serious than predatory journals and must be recognized and duly addressed by all nations, including the developed ones [24].

Sampling limitations apply to our study as we have used a sample of 512 writers to draw inferences and conclusions. More research is warranted in cloned journals as there are very few studies in this area. Researchers should remember that a cloned journal is more dangerous than a predatory or fake journal as it has very high attraction due to the ditto cloning of a journal of repute.


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