



# Hijacked journals: Tips for young researchers, to detect and avoid them

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Due to the huge efforts by the academic community and governments, the awareness about predatory journals and conferences, in recent years, became evident. However, early career researchers and even seniors in many parts of the world still face challenges in academic publishing. These challenges ultimately influence the literature, and therefore; humans and other organisms on the planet as well as their peace.

Journal selection is one of the most challenging aspects of academic publishing, particularly for early-career academics and researchers. There are many, in addition to predatory journals, hijacked and fake journals. Most of these illegitimate publications share the same fake peer review and money collection processes.

The term “Hijacked journals” was coined by Dr. Mehrdad Jalalian in early 2014, an Iranian editor, to describe fake websites that use authentic journals’ details (titles, ISSN, and other metadata) to attract authors and submissions.<sup>1</sup> The hijackers are always experts in designing websites and in programming to create a well-organized websites.<sup>2</sup> They review profiles of ranked journals in reputed indexing databases, and target journals with no link of homepage in their profiles. This makes the hijacking easier and difficult to be detected. The questionable thing is when the hijacker cheats the indexing database to add the newly created website to the authentic journal profile. Therefore, following links in the journal profile at the indexing database will redirect the user to the hijacked journal!.

## HOW TO DETECT HIJACKED JOURNALS?

Although it is difficult for young scientists and early-career researchers to detect hijacked journals, some tips can help in the detection of hijacked journals, as follows:

### 1- By reviewing hijacked journals lists

Some websites and publications provide lists of hijacked journals and their websites, along with the legitimate ones and their websites. Below, two common websites, sheets and lists are listed:

- **Retraction Watch Hijacked Journals Checker:** It was introduced in late May 2022, in collaboration between Anna Abalkina, a Russian economist, and Retraction Watch

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(Center for Scientific Integrity).<sup>3</sup> Simply, it is a dynamic google sheet (i.e. the sheet is updated when new hijacked journals are discovered). The sheet can be accessed via: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ak985WGOgGbJRJbZFanoktAN\\_UFeExpE/edit#gid=5255084](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ak985WGOgGbJRJbZFanoktAN_UFeExpE/edit#gid=5255084)

- **Beall's list website:** It presents a prominent list of predatory open access publishers and journals extracted from the Jeffrey Beall's blog. On the same website, the hijacked journals page can be accessed by following the link: <https://beallist.net/hijacked-journals/>

Although they supply helpful information to young researchers, the above-mentioned lists are not cover all the hijacked journals, especially those that are emerged recently (Table 1).

## 2. By reviewing the journal website

The hijackers mostly hide important information, such as contact details of the journal and editors, or use non-institutional and commercial email addresses (e.g. yahoo and gmail). In addition, for journals that use the digital object identifier or DOI, when following the DOI link or going to (<https://doi.org/DOI>, the DOI should be replaced by the DOI number that begins with 10.xxx) it will direct the user to the same landing page of the article in case of legitimate journals. If the journal is hijacked, the link will direct the user to a page telling him/her that the prefix is not found or something like that. Moreover, the hijacked journals ask the authors to send their manuscripts via email and not by using the submission system.

## 3- By accessing journal via publisher website

This is mainly depends on the journal's profile in the indexing database (e.g. Scopus). The following steps should be followed to assess whether the journal is hijacked:

- Go to the journal's profile in the indexing database
- Find and copy the publisher's name
- Search the copied name in google, and go to the official website of the publisher
- On the publisher's website, search the journal's page or website (usually the journals be under tabs "Publications", "Resources" or "Journals")

## 4- By accessing journal via DOAJ

Mostly, the predatory and hijacked journals are open access publications. Therefore, the authentic open access journals should indexed in the directory of open access journals (DOAJ). To access the legitimate journal, the following steps should be followed:

- Go to DOAJ website via (<https://doaj.org/>)
- Search the questionable journal's ISSN to find the journal's page in the database
- If the journal page present, the website link on the page should redirect the user to the authentic journal
- If the journal page cannot be found, it is better to choose another journal!

**Table 1** Some legitimate journals and hijacked journals that identified recently.

Legitimate journal title	ISSN (eISSN)	Authentic journal website	Counterfeit website
Annals of Forest Research	1844-8135 (2065-2445)	<a href="https://www.afrjournal.org/">https://www.afrjournal.org/</a>	<a href="https://e-afr.org/">https://e-afr.org/</a>
Baltic Journal of Law & Politics	2029-0454	<a href="https://sciendo.com/es/journal/BJLP">https://sciendo.com/es/journal/BJLP</a>	<a href="https://versita.com/bjp/">https://versita.com/bjp/</a>
Central European Management Journal	2336-2693 (2336-4890)	<a href="https://sciendo.com/journal/JMBACE">https://sciendo.com/journal/JMBACE</a>	<a href="http://journals.kozminski.cem-j.com/">http://journals.kozminski.cem-j.com/</a>
Yantu Gongcheng Xuebao/Chinese Journal of Geotechnical Engineering(*)	1000-4548	<a href="http://manu31.magtech.com.cn/jwk_ytgxcb/EN/volumn/ho me.shtml">http://manu31.magtech.com.cn/jwk_ytgxcb/EN/volumn/ho me.shtml</a>	<a href="http://ytgxcb.periodicals.com/">http://ytgxcb.periodicals.com/</a>
Business, Management and Economics Engineering	2669-2481 (2669-249X)	<a href="https://journals.vilniustech.lt/index.php/BMEE">https://journals.vilniustech.lt/index.php/BMEE</a>	<a href="https://businessmanagementeconomics.com/">https://businessmanagementeconomics.com/</a> <a href="https://businessmanagementeconomics.com/">https://businessmanagementeconomics.com/</a>
Journal of New Zealand Studies	1176-306X (2324-3740)	<a href="https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/jnzs">https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/jnzs</a>	<a href="https://journalofnewzealandstudies.com/jnzs/">https://journalofnewzealandstudies.com/jnzs/</a>

Note: In some indexing databases (e.g. Scopus), the counterfeit website was added in the journal's profile as a link to homepage (until Dec 27, 2022). (\*) This journal publishes in print only.

## 5- By advanced search and AI

Some other search methods and algorithm-based methods are introduced by some researchers.<sup>4-6</sup> Mainly, they depend on the time of registering the hijacked websites.

## DECLARATIONS

### Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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