

## Dear Editor, is Impact Factor of your Journal Valid?

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Members of editorial board of any journal frequently face a common question, what is the impact factor of your journal? Even I have faced this situation umpteen number times on various occasions. Therefore I wish to utilize this platform to discuss this important issue. Bogus impact factor agencies and predatory journals are playing on front foot as they have gone one step ahead after assessing the academic market of demand and supply. True academicians need to be cautious about the racket of valid and invalid impact factors.

Authors and readers including academic faculty and especially post-graduate students may be benefited by this editorial. Aim of this activity is to make aware of academicians about true and counterfeit / fake impact factors often used by predatory publishers<sup>[1]</sup> The impact factor (IF) or Journal impact factor (JIF) is one of the most important measure of appraisal of academic faculty for the purposes of academic evaluation such as selections and promotions used by various universities or institutions in current scenario. Consulting Journal Citation Reports' master journal list can confirm if a publication is indexed by Journal Citation Reports, which is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for obtaining an IF.

The impact factor an academic journal is a measure reflecting the yearly average number of citations to recent articles published in that journal. It is frequently used as a proxy for the relative importance of a journal within its field; journals with higher impact factors are often deemed to be more important than those with lower ones. In 1927, Gross and Gross proposed the concept of counting references to rank scientific journals.<sup>[2]</sup> In 1955, Garfield<sup>[3]</sup> suggested that the number of references could be used to measure the "impact" of a journal, but the term "impact

factor" was introduced in 1963 by Garfield and Sher.<sup>[4]</sup> This finally led to the publication of Thomson Reuter's Journal Citation Reports (JCR) as part of a science citation index. In 1964, Garfield introduced the first science citation index in a 5-volume print edition that indexed 613 journals and included 1.4 million citations.<sup>[5]</sup>

Impact factor is calculated on the basis of the number of citations received in that year by articles published in that journal during the two preceding years, divided by the total number of articles published in that journal during the two preceding years. It is worth noting here that because it is calculated over a period of 2 years after being indexed by Thomson Reuters, a journal, which is newly launched and not indexed with Thomson Reuters cannot possibly have an impact factor.

It is observed that some journals are claiming certain "obscure impact factors" other than "Thomson Reuters' JCR Impact Factor" such as Scientific Journal Impact Factor (SJIF), Universal Impact Factor (UIF), Global Impact Factor (GIF), IBI (Info Base Index) Factor, ISIFI (International Services for Impact Factor and Indexing), Cosmos Impact Factor, I2OR Impact Factor etc. such In the light of above discussion, it can be stated that any form of impact factor other than "Thomson Reuters' JCR Impact Factor" claimed by any journal is "fake/ counterfeit impact factor" and will not be considered for the purposes of academic evaluation. There is a happy symbiosis between "bogus impact factor agencies" and "predatory journals."<sup>[1,6]</sup>

Fake/ counterfeit impact factors resemble the original impact factor. This point should be kept in mind while choosing a journal for submitting the research to any



journal. Private indexing companies are allocating fake “impact factors” to journals on payment. Such bogus IFs are real threat to the literature and definitely matter of concern. Inventor of the impact factor Eugene Garfield cautions, “In 1955, it did not occur to me that the impact would one day become so controversial. Like nuclear energy, the impact factor is a mixed blessing. I expected it to be used constructively while recognizing that in the wrong hands it might be abused.”<sup>[7]</sup>

Strict criteria demanding compulsory publications of research papers might be one of the cause creating such demand. This academic regulatory move has not given due weightage to quality of research. As a result, quantity took precedence over quality. Unethical practices took precedence over scientific integrity. Research cannot be produced on demand in an environment that has never been conducive to research.<sup>[8]</sup> Sense of insecurity among academicians regarding their future job, selections and promotions are probably some of the factors which have been exploited by nexus of predatory journals and bogus impact factor agencies. In the light of above facts, its high time for all the stakeholders to understand the root causes of this phenomena, setting up a robust system by plugging up the loopholes before it is too late.

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fees from the authors as we are following the ‘Gold Open Access Model’ allowing high visibility of their work. I am happy to share with all that journal has performed reasonably well since the launch of first issue in Oct-Dec 2015. We have published all the issues on regular basis. Our journal is already covered by many international indexing databases of repute like Index Copernicus, Google Scholar, EBSCO Publishing’s Electronic Databases, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research etc and in process for others like PubMed, Scopus, EMBASE and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). This information would further help to curtail the hesitation of authors to certain extent to submit their best papers to us and not allowing the ‘paradox of Catch 22’ to succeed.

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