

ResearchGate and Impact Factor: A step further on predatory journals

Aamir Raof Memon

Madam, my paper¹ highlighted an important shortcoming of ResearchGate (RG) however, before its publication, ResearchGate had already made some changes to its user interface and probably in its policies. For example, the recent addition of "what you're working on right now/add your current project", and the options similar to Facebook such as "like" or "comment". Also, recent removal of the impact points from the profile of users is a good initiative taken by the RG staff. This initiative and the recent developments might help decline the shortcomings of RG. Another development seen in RG is the removal of impact factor for possible or probable predatory journals. Most of the journals mentioned in the Beall's list and those in my paper have now been available without an impact factor on RG which will be helpful for early career and inexperienced researchers to avoid such journals.^{1,2} It is very important to understand that the Thomson Reuters (now Clarivate Analytics) is the legitimate impact factor agency and in this context, journals included in its Journal Citation Reports (JCR), which is issued every year, should be considered a suitable outlet for publication. A journal's mere inclusion in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), one of the databases of Thomson Reuters, does not guarantee the credibility of the journal as it is the initial step for a journal's evaluation. There is no clear cut demarcation between legitimate and predatory journals however, a cautious decision by the researchers in selecting the target journal is important. In this regard, apart from the journal selection strategies mentioned in my paper, Beall's "Criteria for Determining Predatory Open-Access Publishers" is also a helpful resource.³

Despite these recent improvements in the ResearchGate, there is still ambiguity prevailing. It is worth mentioning that the RG users express reservations about its unclear and ambiguous features such as the journal impact factor, researchers' impact points and the RG score.⁴ For instance, impact factor on

RG is different from the impact factor mentioned in a journal's website because the impact factor on RG is based on its own records of the citation counts from the work published in a journal without considering any indexation database (such as Science Citation Index Expanded) into account. To elaborate further, the Journal of Pakistan Medical Association (JPMA) had an impact factor of 0.488 on its website based on the JCR data (2015)⁵ which on RG is 0.51.⁶ Another example, the International Journal of Physiotherapy (IJPHY) which was mentioned in my paper, had an impact factor of 1.02 on RG a couple of months ago but now its impact factor is 0.00.^{1,7} Moreover, the IJPHY is in the Beall's list and it has been included in the ESCI but not in the JCR.⁸ Given this, it is important that the ResearchGate should be transparent in its interface and policies, it should at least reveal the process of calculating journal impact factor and the RG score (important journal and author level metrics in the RG) to its users so that the rising ambiguities about it may be reduced. It is also clear from the above two examples that the scientometrics on RG and those in the JCR are not at the same level, so the researchers should use their judgement in selecting the potential outlet for publication rather than bluntly relying on ResearchGate because RG as of now, appears to be a source of increasing the visibility and access to their work but not the measure of impact and quality of their work.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to acknowledge Dr. Ahmed Waqas, CMH Lahore Medical College & Institute of Dentistry, Lahore, Pakistan for reviewing this paper and his valuable suggestions in improving its content.

Conflict of Interest: Nil.

Disclosure: Nil.

Funding: Nil.

References

1. Memon AR. ResearchGate is no longer reliable: leniency towards ghost journals may decrease its impact on the scientific community. *J Pak Med Assoc.* 2016; 66: 1643-7.
2. Beall's List of Predatory Publishers [Internet]. 2016 [Cited 24 November 2016]. Available from URL: <https://scholarlyoa.com/2016/01/05/bealls-list-of-predatory->

.....
 Institute of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Sciences, Peoples University of Medical & Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, Sindh, Pakistan.

Correspondence: Email: dpt.aamir@gmail.com

- publishers-2016/.
 3. Criteria for Determining Predatory Open-Access Publishers [Internet]. 2012 [Cited 24 November 2016]. Available from URL: <https://scholarlyoa.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/criteria-2012-2.pdf>.
 4. ResearchGate Search [Internet]. 2016 [Cited 28 November 2016]. Available from URL: <https://www.researchgate.net/search.Search.html?query=RG%20score%20impact%20point%20factor&type=question>.
 5. Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association [Internet]. 2016 [Cited 24 November 2016]. Available from URL: www.jpma.org.pk/current_factor.php
 6. Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association (J Pakistan Med Assoc) [Internet]. 2016 [Cited 24 November 2016]. Available from URL: https://www.researchgate.net/journal/0030-9982_Journal_of_the_Pakistan_Medical_Association.
 7. International Journal of Physiotherapy [Internet]. 2016 [Cited 24 November 2016]. Available from URL: https://www.researchgate.net/journal/2348-8336_International_Journal_of_Physiotherapy.
 8. Somoza-Fernández M, Rodríguez-Gairín JM, Urbano C. Presence of alleged predatory journals in bibliographic databases: Analysis of Beall's list. *El profesional de la información*. 2016; 25: 730-7.
-