

UGC-approved list of journals full of bogus publications

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Urgent, coordinated effort with the participation of researchers, institutions, funders, regulators and academics to stop mushrooming of dubious journals.
- Such publications need to be challenged, questioned and de-recognised at every level.
- Academia and government agencies should "work

together to develop stringent punitive provisions and decide strategies for damage control"

- UGC may consider establishing a 'Centre for Publication Ethics' to create wider awareness among faculty and students and thwart "the rapidly growing predatory publishing business and 'pay and publish trash' culture."

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PUNE: A requirement that scholars get at least two research papers published in a University Grants Commission-approved journal before submitting their doctoral theses, coupled with pressure on university teachers to get their research published regularly in academic periodicals, has produced an unexpected side-effect: It has led to

a proliferation of dubious journals.

A study to be published in the March 25 issue of Current Science notes a spurt in the number of predatory and dubious journals offering 'pay and publish' services to gullible authors.

For the study titled "A critical analysis of the 'UGC-approved list of journals,'" a team of six researchers, in association with the Human Resource Development (HRD)

Ministry, analysed 1,336 academic periodicals randomly selected from a list of 5,699 journals in the so-called university-source component. Their conclusion: "Over 88% of non-indexed journals in the university source component of UGC-approved list could be of low quality."

While the UGC website lists 32,659 journals, university-source journals (5,699) are those which are recom-

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mended by various universities in the country, the paper notes. UGC has admitted that it received several complaints about the inclusion of low-quality journals soon after the release of its approved list of journals on 2 June 2017. The UGC has removed a few journals after an evaluation, the paper said.

The dubious publications were identified by the team of researchers that included Bhushan Patwardhan, a professor at the Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU), a special invitee member on the UGC Standing Committee for Notification of Journals and former vice-chancellor of Symbiosis International University.

The other academicians who worked on the analysis were Shubhada Nagarkar (Department of Library and Information Science, SPPU), Shridhar R. Gadre (Interdisciplinary School of Scientific Computing, SPPU), Subhash C. Lakhotia (Department of Zoology, Banaras Hindu University), Vishwa Mohan Katoch (Rajasthan University of Health Sciences, Jaipur) and David Moher (Centre for Journalology, Clinical Epidemiology Program, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, Ottawa).

Out of the 1,336 journals studied, 897 were disqualified from the UGC-approved list of journals by the human resource development ministry for providing false information such as an incorrect ISSN (International Standard Serial Number), making false claims about the impact getting published in their pages would have, indexing in dubious databases, poor credentials of editors and non-availability of information such as an address, website details and names of edi-

tors. Papers published in the disqualified journals will not be considered valid.

"It is an alarming situation that such a huge percentage of the journals are bogus. Globally, it hampers the image of our country," Patwardhan said.

The HRD ministry has adopted a very positive approach to dealing with the issue "and has decided to remove all the bogus journals from the UGC list shortly," Patwardhan said.

The paper also cites two research studies published in Nature and Nature India last year which found that "a large number of predatory journals and associated articles originate in India" after analysing 1,907 articles published in 200 journals.

The UGC regulations, modified in the year 2013, mandated publication of at least two papers in journals prior to submission of a doctoral thesis. The "publish or perish" criterion also applies to career advancement in the university system.

Reports of unethical practices in publishing of research papers, leading to an increase in the number of predatory, dubious and low-quality journals have been surfacing over the years, which was why the study was initiated, Patwardhan said.

Amit Shah

"On the issue of special status for Andhra Pradesh, it is regrettable that some political parties are whipping up public sentiments rather than encouraging an informed debate which is the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy," he wrote.

The BJP president said the Centre had offered a Special Assistance Measure (financial package) to Andhra Pradesh in September 2016, which was