

Scholarly Black Market

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Abstract Fake and unethical publishers' activities are known by most of the readers of *Science and Engineering Ethics*. This letter tries to draw the readers' attention to the hidden side of some of these publishers' business. Here the black market of scholarly articles, which negatively affects the validity and reliability of research in higher education, as well as science and engineering, will be introduced.

Keywords Publication · Fake and unethical publishers · Scholarly black market · Publication validity and reliability

In recent years, fake and unethical publishers (FUPs) have become an increasing concern in the scholarly world. The last few years have witnessed an increased number of predatory, fake and hijacked journals and conferences on the Internet. Some FUPs abuse the identities of academicians and researchers by using their names as members in their steering committees (Dadkhah et al. 2015a, b). They also abuse the identities of organizations by using their names as sponsors on their websites. This happens even though the above organizations or academicians may not exist; and if they do, the said organizations and academicians may not know that their name is used in FUP's activities.

The FUPs send spoofed emails to researchers asking them to take part in their journal/conference. Authors are guaranteed that their articles will be published after acceptance and often in well-known indexed databases. Later, the articles are accepted and the authors are charged for publication of their articles or registration for conferences. However, these articles are never published in the promised journal/proceedings. While these FUPs cheat an increasing number of authors, they

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also collect information and addresses of their victims which are sold for marketing purposes (Dadkhah et al. 2015a) to projects with other FUPs and maybe to credible publishers.

Another part of some of FUPs business is scholarly black markets (SBMs), where scholarly articles are bought and sold. It is no wonder that a researcher finds his/her article submitted to the FUPs published in someone else's name. However, a safer option for FUPs is to translate the articles into the buyers' local language for publication in regional journals or conference proceedings. These SBMs are born through the increasing need of academics to publish thereby enhancing their reputation and supporting promotion. This also applies to postgraduate students because many institutions now require publication for graduation. FUPs and SBMs negatively affect the validity and reliability of higher education.

As Scholarly Black Markets are lucrative and appear to be on the increase, authors are advised to be circumspect and exercise extreme caution where they present their research. Likewise, unprofessional language editing agencies can be involved in SBMs (Dadkhah 2015). Journal editors and conference organizers need to be very careful how they select their reviewers and what information they share with them as there is a possibility of involvement of unprofessional reviewers in the SBMs.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

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