
A Warning about the Predatory, Fraudulent Version of IJME

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this essay is to warn IJME readers about the possibility of publishing in predatory, fraudulent journals, using the predatory, fraudulent version of IJME as an example of dishonest publishing practices. This examination is meant to help IJME readers better understand the exploitative intentions of these nefarious entities and to recognize some common features in their communications and websites in order to avoid them. It is emphasized that the ultimate responsibility for publishing in legitimate journals lies with the authors themselves. Due diligence in carefully examining journal websites and publications can help authors evaluate journal credibility.

KEYWORDS: Predatory journals, fraudulent journals, open access publishing, dishonest publishing practices

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The purpose of this essay is to warn *International Journal of Multicultural Education* (IJME) readers about the possibility of publishing in predatory, fraudulent journals, using the predatory, fraudulent version of IJME as an example of dishonest publishing practices. Through this examination, the IJME editorial board and I hope to help IJME readers better understand the exploitative intentions of these nefarious entities and to recognize some common features in their communications and websites so scholars can avoid them.

For the last few years, the editors of IJME have been aware of a predatory, fraudulent journal mimicking our journal, pretending to be us, and "publishing" papers for a fee. This fraudulent journal can be found at <https://ijmejournal.org/ijme/index.php/ijme.html>. Their website URL is very similar to ours; it is just missing the hyphen between "ijme" and "journal". For simplicity and to help readers remember which site is legitimate, I refer to the problematic journal as "the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen)" throughout this essay.

When we at IJME first became aware of this issue, we took several actions, including reporting the fraudulent journal to our university lawyers, as well as the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC). We also talked to our publishing platform, PKP, and asked them to deactivate the fraudulent site.

We learned that this cannot be done. As an early innovator in open access research, PKP designed an Open Journal System (OJS) with the explicit goal of making publishing easy, accessible, and inexpensive for researchers and readers. Anyone can download their software and run the OJS for free. While free publishing platforms have been a tremendous boost for open access journals, they have also led to a huge and rapid increase in fraudulent, predatory journals, such as the one mimicking IJME. It has been estimated that, in 2021, at least 15,000 predatory journals existed (Laine, et al., 2025). That number has only grown as time has passed.

Predatory journals and publishers have been defined as “entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices” (Grudniewicz et al., 2019, p. 211). That is certainly the case of the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen). Because it and many other predatory journals are illegitimate “ghost” entities, efforts to sue them have been unsuccessful and, although they have been reported to the FBI and FTC, no positive outcomes have resulted.

We, the editorial board of IJME, realize the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) is intentionally targeting scholars who hope to publish their work in our legitimate journal (ijme-journal.org). Specifically, the fraudulent journal seeks to entice international and novice scholars with dishonest promises of quick publication in a high status, Scopus-indexed journal, with a long and respected history. They accept papers quickly and charge large amounts of money for publication. Once a paper is printed on their website (ijmejournal.org), the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) stops communicating with authors. Authors discover the papers are not indexed in any academic database and eventually learn that the journal is illegitimate.

To help our readers and future authors avoid this as well as other predatory journals, we are sharing in this essay an examination of the practices of the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) compared to our own legitimate journal (ijme-journal.org). Specifically, in this essay, we examine email communication from the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) and its website to illuminate the signs that indicate they are a fraudulent entity. When determining where to publish one’s work, it is important to understand that the creators of predatory, fraudulent journals are scammers whose only goal is to swindle as much money as possible from scholars. That mission sets them apart entirely from legitimate journals whose goal is to advance knowledge.

Email Invitations from Predatory, Fraudulent Journal

Several IJME readers have forwarded aggressive emails to me, asking whether they are legitimate invitations for publication opportunities. They are not. To make our readers aware of what communication from the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) looks like, Figure 1, below, shares a recent email invitation to submit papers to the fraudulent entity.

From: **Editor's Office** <editor@ijmejournal.org>

Date: Tue, Feb 10, 2026 at 11:46 AM

Subject: Call for Papers; Impact Factor, SCOPUS Q1 (2026), and ESCI Indexed Journal

To: <>

ISSN 1934-5267

International Journal of Multicultural Education (IJME)

(Impact Factor, SCOPUS Q1, WOS)

Eastern University, USA

Call for Papers

(Open Access Publishing)

Dear Scholar,

International Journal of Multicultural Education (IJME) is a multidisciplinary peer-reviewed journal that is hosted and published by Eastern University, USA.

IJME welcomes the submission of articles related to the scope of the journal.

Indexing:

- [Impact Factor 1.50](#)
- [SCOPUS \(Q1 & Q2\)](#)
- ESCI, "Web of Science (EOS)"
- [EconLit](#) / JEL – American Economic Association
- Business Source Corporate – EBSCO Publishing
- ProQuest
- Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
- [Index Islamicus](#)

Authors can submit the paper through online system: [Paper Submission](#)

Publication Fee:

For any questions regarding the Article Processing Charges, please contact the Editor's Office.

AUTHORS BEWARE "We are a USA based Journal, and does not operate from any other country"

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Regards,

Editor's Office

International Journal of Multicultural Education (IJME)

South Dakota, USA.

www.ijmejournal.org

*Impact Factor 1.50

*SCOPUS Q1 for Cultural Studies, Q2 for Social Sciences

Figure 1

Fraudulent Journal Email Invitation

There are many issues to examine in this email invitation. First, note that the predatory journal uses the email address: editor@ijmejournal.org. Anyone can create a .org email. The legitimate IJME uses a university email address linked to me, the Editor in Chief: sherry.marx.ijme@usu.edu. This address is affiliated with Utah State University, where I am a professor. Only those affiliated with a university have access to a university email address. Second, notice all the ranking and indexing information shared in the email

– including in the subject line – with various capitalization, bolding, and highlighting. This is considered extremely unprofessional and would not be used by a legitimate journal. The scammers' emphasis in red ink color that "We are a USA based journal, and does not operate from any other country" is a red flag for its imperfect English language and its stress on the USA as a legitimizing location for publication. Research shows that fraudulent, predatory journals typically target scholars outside the United States, knowing the pressures they often face to publish in high-ranking, indexed journals in order to be promoted, work with graduate students, or even receive their PhDs (Chatio et al., 2023; Demir, 2018; Torres, 2022). In reality, the legitimate IJME is presently published by Yonsei University in the Republic of Korea.

Third, the rankings shared in this email are fabricated and, while numerous indexing sites are listed, only articles in the legitimate IJME (ijme-journal.org) are indexed in ESCI (Clarivate Analytics), Scopus, ERIC, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. The articles in the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) are not indexed at all. Like typical predatory journals, the fraudulent IJME's (no hyphen) emails and website "present contradictory statements, fake impact factors, incorrect addresses, misrepresentations of the editorial board, false claims of indexing or membership of associations and misleading claims about the rigor of peer review" (Grudniewicz et al., 2019, p. 211). It is possible that the scammers who created the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) journal operate dozens of other fake journal sites, all aiming to exploit scholars for as much money as possible.

Fourth, note the opaque mention of article process charges: "**Publication Fee:** For any questions regarding the Article Processing Charges, please contact the Editor's Office." This statement about fees is clearly evasive, another marker of an illegitimate journal (Laine et al., 2025). Opaqueness regarding article processing charges (APC) means the fraudulent journal will charge whatever they want and believe the author can offer. In contrast to this oblique language about publishing charges, the legitimate IJME (ijme-journal.org) states explicitly on its website that "the *International Journal of Multicultural Education* (IJME) is a **FREE**, peer-reviewed open access journal for scholars, practitioners, and students of multicultural education" (ijme-journal.org). There is also a running note on the bottom of each page stating that "IJME is a peer-reviewed, open access journal that is **FREE** to authors and readers."

Scholars considering publishing in IJME or other open access journals can view information about the journal on the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) website (<https://doaj.org/>). Getting a journal accepted into the DOAJ is a lengthy process that requires much conversation with the DOAJ and adjusting the journal practices and website to meet DOAJ specifications. Being included in this directory is a clear marker of journal quality. The DOAJ IJME website notes that IJME is published by Yonsei University in the Republic of Korea and states that there are no article publishing charges (APC), nor any other fees to publish in the journal. There is also a direct link to the legitimate journal's website (ijme-journal.org). Anyone with concerns about whether an open access journal is legitimate can use this site as a helpful guide and direct link to the legitimate journal. See Figure 2 (below) for a screenshot of the DOAJ IJME webpage.

The screenshot shows the DOAJ website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'DOAJ', 'SUPPORT', 'APPLY', and 'SEARCH'. Below this, the main content area displays '1 indexed journals'. On the left, there are filters for 'SEE JOURNALS...' (Without fees, Author retains all rights) and 'SUBJECTS' (Agriculture, Auxiliary sciences of history, Bibliography, Library science, Information resources, Education, Fine Arts, General Works, Geography, Anthropology). The main search results area shows the 'International Journal of Multicultural Education' with details: 'Published by Yonsei University in Korea, Republic of Accepts manuscripts in English', 'Journal subjects: Education: Theory and practice of education', and 'Last full review on 10 Jan 2024'. It also lists 'No APC; No other charges', 'Author doesn't retain all rights', and 'CC BY-NC'. Navigation controls like 'Sort by' (Added to DOAJ (newest first)), 'Results per page' (10), and 'Page 1 of 1' are visible.

Figure 2
Directory of Open Access (DOAJ) IJME Webpage

The email invitation to publish in the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) is a model example of communication from a fraudulent journal. Please examine it carefully to avoid dealing with the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) as well as other fraudulent journal scammers. If you have doubts about the legitimacy of an open access journal, look up the journal in the DOAJ and click the direct link to the journal in question.

Predatory, Fraudulent Journal's Website

The fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) website also has many indicators that it is a fraudulent, predatory entity. First, it includes no mention of article processing charges (APC), yet it does not mention that publishing is free, as it is in the legitimate journal. The fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) intentionally obscures its publishing fees. It pretends to be a legitimate journal, accepting papers quickly, and then surprising authors with a mandatory fee before publication is possible. Their goal is maximum financial exploitation of scholars and they take advantage of weaknesses in the open access system for their own monetary benefit.

Second, the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) emphasizes its intention to “speed up the process of peer review” (<https://ijmejournal.org/ijme/index.php/ijme/peerreviewpolicy.html>). This statement is a clear red flag that reveals the journal's predatory nature with its “deviation from best editorial and publication practices” (Grudniewicz et al., 2019, p. 211). Peer review takes time and is typically the slowest part of the publication process. The fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) does not peer review papers because its only purpose is to exploit scholars for their money. It has no interest in legitimate research. In this sense, the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) is what Merga (2024) calls an “extreme example” of predatory journals. Merga (2024) explains that,

Extreme examples of predatory journal[s]... meet the criteria for *disinformation*, in that it can be argued that they have “explicit intent to manipulate or deceive others” (American Psychological Association, 2023, p. 7) through mimicking a peer-reviewed output. This leads readers to “wrongly believe such publications are legitimate scientific journals.” (pp. 683-684, citing Pyne, 2017, p. 137; italics in original)

In contrast to such predatory and deceitful practices, the legitimate IJME reviews all submissions to determine which are appropriate for the journal’s focus on multicultural education and have potential for publication. Those deemed to have potential are assigned to journal editors. Editors then review the manuscript and, if they also feel the paper has potential, they assign it to three reviewers. Reviewers are considered “blind” because they do not know the names of manuscript authors and manuscript authors do not know who the reviewers are. Reviewer feedback is given anonymously to authors in the form of detailed manuscript reviews. Reviewers for the legitimate IJME are not paid for this contribution to the journal and to academia; rather, they provide a highly skilled service that is deeply valued and allows for rigorous generation and distribution of knowledge. IJME peer review takes time, typically between one and three months but sometimes longer if it is difficult to find reviewers for a particular manuscript. The editor then works with completed reviews to make a decision of “decline” or “revisions required” and shares that decision with authors.

Articles published in “[e]xtreme examples of predatory journals” (Merga, 2024, p. 683) are not indexed in legitimate databases for scholarship such as ESCI, Scopus, ERIC, EBSCOhost, or Google Scholar. As a result of this lack of indexing, articles published in such predatory sources will likely not be cited. Lack of citation is a positive outcome of extreme predatory publishing because the studies published are not evaluated nor peer-reviewed. There is no way to ensure their quality, and they should not be considered legitimate research (Laine et al., 2025). Papers published in predatory journals that simply have high acceptance rates and low quality standards do get cited and are known to disrupt the quality of research in their fields (Laine et al., 2025).

Scholars feeling pressure to publish may determine that a fraudulent journal is an acceptable outlet for their work, given the quick time to publication (Demir, 2018; Shanghaei et al., 2018). However, scholars pressured to publish in journals that are legitimately indexed will find that their work has simply been printed for payment. Because an article has been posted on the fraudulent, predatory journal’s website, it is technically considered “published” and will not thereafter be considered by a legitimate publication source. Over the years, several scholars have reached out to me asking if the legitimate IJME would publish their work after it was inadvertently published in the fraudulent journal. Unfortunately, that is not possible because the work is no longer considered original.

Other indicators that the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) website is, indeed, fraudulent are its reliance on a WhatsApp number for communication. Legitimate journals will have legitimate scholars or publishers at desks with legitimate telephone numbers and/or emails. Note the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) misspells WhatsApp on their website (I am sure they will correct this issue now that I have stated it here). The English used in their website and email communications is consistently imperfect. A legitimate journal

ensures their English language is exemplary at the highest academic level. Additionally, as in their email solicitations, the fraudulent IJME's (no hyphen) website is filled with names and icons of indexes and rankings, some of which are associated with the legitimate journal, but most of which are fabricated. Additionally, the predatory site has largely copied our legitimate journal website. Their "Editorial Team" is a mismatch of names of people who serve or have served on our legitimate IJME editorial board: compare <https://ijmejournal.org/ijme/index.php/ijme/about/editorialTeam.html> and <https://ijme-journal.org/index.php/ijme/about/editorialTeam> to see the similarities. Careful examination of their current and archived "publications" show that the fraudulent journal publishes on any topic; that some articles have DOIs while others do not; and that some issues have just a few articles while others have dozens. These inconsistencies, as well as all the misrepresentation in the fraudulent IJME's (no hyphen) website, are strong signs of a fraudulent journal.

Fraudulent Journal Email "Acceptance" Letter

Thanks to IJME readers, we have another email letter from the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) to share. This email, below in Figure 3, claims to "accept" a manuscript after expedited review and requests payment.

From: <editor@ijmejournal.org>
 Date: Fri, Feb 13, 2026 at 10:45 AM
 Subject: Letter of Acceptance by International Journal of Multicultural Education (ESCI – WOS, SCOPUS Q1)
 To: <>

Dear Author,

We are glad to declare that after the peer review your paper is accepted by International Journal of Multicultural Education. You can find the review report attached here. Kindly send us the final copy of your paper after incorporating all the improvements marked by the worthy reviewer.

You are also requested to deposit the APC, **GBP 700**, for the said paper, and share the deposit details with us through a return email.

For payments from the rest of the World:

Fee:	700 GBP
Account Title:	PJ Global Limited
Account number:	52957352
IBAN:	GB25TRWI23080152957352
Sort code:	23-08-01
SWIFT/BIC:	TRWIGB2LXXX
Account type:	Business
Bank Name:	Wise Payments Limited
Bank Address:	56 Shoreditch High Street, London E1 6JJ, United Kingdom (GB)

Please note that the author of this paper does not belong to USA so the fee is to be paid in GBP i.e. 700.

As mentioned above, in UK, PJ Global Limited is our financial associates

IJME bears 1.46 Impact factor and Q1

class <https://www.resurchify.com/impact/details/21100202940>

Note: DOI will be allotted after 7 days of publication.

Author Beware

It has also come to our Notice that some Turkish entities hijacked our emails and asked authors to pay into a personal account in Turkey. if you ever receive such spam mail, please ignore it and report on WhatsApp

It is requested to use only the Above-mentioned official company account to pay your APC

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Regards,

Editor's Office

International Journal of Multicultural Education

South Dakota, USA.

Call/WhatsApp: +1 605-824-1953

www.ijmejournal.org

International Journal of Multicultural Education

***Impact Factor 1.46**

***Scopus (2018) Q1 for Cultural Studies, Q2 for Anthropology and Social Sciences**

Figure 3

Fraudulent Journal Email "Acceptance" Letter

Most of the information shared in this email regards payment, a fee of 700 GBP that was not mentioned in earlier invitation emails or the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) website. Also, note that authors are asked to directly deposit this money into an account titled "PJ Global Limited" at the London-based Wise Payments Limited (WPL). WPL is a known international money transfer service. Because of their "ghost" nature, it is not

known where the scammers actually reside. However, they claim to be United States-based. If that were the case, they would not use a money transfer service based in the United Kingdom. Legitimate open access journals that require APCs often have a payment option linked to their website. Credit cards or PayPal accounts are typically used to make these payments due to the convenience and the protections embedded within them. If an author pays with a credit card or PayPal account and then changes their mind because the journal seems illegitimate, they can cancel the payment. They can also report the illegitimate journal to the credit card companies. Payments made directly to a money transfer service are not protected.

In addition, legitimate open access journals offer opportunities to waive the APC for those who need help with payment. Because the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) is only concerned with money, waiver of payment likely would not be an option for them. Also note that, in this email, it is stated that “**DOI will be allotted after 7 days of publication.**” In the PKP publishing platform, the unique DOI number associated with the manuscript is assigned the moment a manuscript is published. It is an automatic part of the system. The statement that the DOI will be given after publication is another red flag indicating that a DOI may not be assigned at all. While the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) website for recent publications shows DOIs assigned to manuscripts, these DOIs are simply collected in an open repository of manuscripts (zenodo.org); they are not indexed in databases for peer-reviewed scholarship such as ESCI, Scopus, ERIC, EBSCOhost, or Google Scholar. It is good practice to enter the name of an article into Google Scholar, for example, and see if the paper can be found in the index. Papers printed by the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) cannot be found in these recognized academic databases. When examining the fraudulent journal website, sometimes DOIs are included with articles, sometimes they are not. These are all signs of predatory scammers seeking to exploit scholars feeling pressure to publish in high level journals.

To help our readers better understand key differences between the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) and the legitimate IJME (ijme-journal.org), we have organized them in Table 1. We recognize that the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) may also learn from the information we share here to continue improving their communication with the scholarly community. While this is a real risk, we believe that informed scholars can use this information to make good publishing decisions and protect their work from the fraudulent IJME as well as other predatory journals. Taking one’s time to thoroughly vet a publication outlet is an important component of the publication process. Remember, the goal of the fraudulent IJME (no hyphen) will always be to scam money from scholars, so money will be their primary focus, no matter how polished their communication may become.

Differences Between Journals	
Fraudulent IJME (ijmejournal.org)	Legitimate IJME (ijme-journal.org)
Email address with .org domain: editor@ijmejournal.org	Email address affiliated with a university: sherry.marx.ijme@usu.edu
Frequent, aggressive email invitations to publish in the journal	Occasional emails announcing and linking calls for papers, special issues, and newly published issues of the journal
Inconsistent English language quality	Consistent, excellent academic English
Multiple colors, fonts, bolding, all caps, no caps in messages	Professional black and white text
Frequent, emphasized mention of inclusion in multiple academic data bases with many icons	Databases are mentioned on website without iconography
Emphasizes “USA-based” location	Based in Republic of Korea
Unclear and inconsistent mention of article processing charges (APC)	States clearly on website that publishing in IJME is free
Charges for publication; 700 GBP in the emails shared here but the amounts vary	No publication charges
Requires payments be directly deposited to an account at Wise Payments Limited in the UK	No publication charges
Emphasizes intention to “speed up” peer review	Website states “Submissions that advance from prescreening will be subject to originality-testing and double-blind peer review.”
Accepts papers quickly	Responds to reviewed papers in 1-3 months or so. Typical feedback is “revisions required.” Papers are never accepted quickly.
Journal website not linked in DOAJ	Journal website directly linked in DOAJ
DOIs said to be allotted 7 days after publication	DOIs assigned immediately when published
Article DOIs are collected in an open access, UK-based repository (zenodo.org)	Article DOIs are included in major academic indexes
Journal articles are not included in any academic databases	Journal articles are included in ESCI, Scopus, ERIC, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar academic databases
Uses WhatsApp number for communication	Uses email sherry.marx.ijme@usu.edu for communication

Table 1

Differences Between Fraudulent IJME and Legitimate IJME Journals

Final Thoughts on Fraudulent, Predatory Journals

The purpose of this essay to help IJME readers better understand the predatory practices of fraudulent open access journals, using the “extreme example” (Merga, 2024) of the fraudulent IJME (no-hyphen) as one known case. Ultimately, it must be emphasized that it is the *responsibility of the author* to examine journals carefully to ensure they submit papers to legitimate journals and avoid fraudulent, predatory journals. Opportunities that seem too good to be true, such as having a paper accepted quickly with little or no revisions required, are clear red flags. Authors should always exercise due diligence to carefully explore the journals where they hope to publish. Even the legitimate IJME receives several submissions each week that are not a good fit for the journal; we highly recommend that potential authors carefully examine journal websites to ensure they are a good match for their work. The DOAJ (<https://doaj.org/>) is an exceptional source for finding legitimate publication outlets. Another tool that many find helpful is the website <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>, which walks scholars through several steps that help them assess a journal’s legitimacy. We at IJME hope the scholars we reach through this essay will use this information to protect their scholarship and their reputation by making informed decisions in their publication efforts.

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Heliyon, 8(3), 1-6.

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