Implications of Predatory Journal Scandal

What is the issue?

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Predatory journal scandal raises questions about the undermining higher education system in India.

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What is predatory journal scandal?

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- Predatory open-access publishing is an exploitative open-access academic publishing business model that involves charging publication fees to authors without providing the editorial and publishing services associated with legitimate journals.
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- In May, the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed a case in the District Court of Nevada against a Hyderabad-based outfit called OMICS for making false claims for journals it publishes.
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- OMICS is neither a new offender nor the only one, An American academic had raised this charge as far back as 2013 and the FTC had charged OMICS in September last year.
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- An investigative report has established that India specifically Hyderabad has become the hotspot of the predatory journal industry with over 300 such bucket-shop outfits.
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- They charge between $30 and $1,800 to “publish” a “research paper” in a so-called international journal complete with editors, peer reviews and so on.
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What are the concerns spotlighted by the scandal?

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- FTC discovered that journals published from India are owned by fraudulent self-publishing outfits and the papers mostly written by Indian academics, it turns out had not gone through even the minimum of checks.
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- The absence of the basic editorial standards means three things:
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1. The veracity of these papers is unconfirmed.
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2. The quality and rigour of the research are unverified and dubious.
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3. The level of plagiarism is shockingly high.
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- Academics have frequently discovered their researches reproduced verbatim in someone else's paper without any attribution, though some writers have had the chutzpah to tag on the name of the original writer (without permission, of course) in a joint by-line.
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What's driving such academic Scandal in India?

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- The principal factor appears to be a performance indicator, the number of papers an academic published instituted by the University Grants Commission for promotion.
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- This metric and the UGC's failure to create the kind of environment that fosters high-quality research have driven Indian academics to cut corners for advancement.
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- The knock-on effects on the quality of higher academics do not require a peer-reviewed paper to understand.
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- In India is caught between poorly designed regulation, inadequate funding and governments whose approach ranges from benign neglect to disturbing attempts to shape arts and science curricula to ideological agendas.
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What measures needs to be taken?

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- Union government takes creative attempts to develop an environment of greater autonomy for universities, technical and management education institutes, outside the purview of the stultified and discredited regulatory authorities.
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- These are all part of the search for academic excellence, principally in terms of achieving higher placement on influential global rankings of academia.
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- The lesson from the countries with the most reputed institutes of higher learning is the criticality of political forbearance in academia.
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- Apart from that India must encourage the light touch regulation that enables private funding to drive and sustain quality research and development.
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Source: Business Standard

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