



# Impact Factor and UGC List of Approved Journals - Boon or Bane?

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Teaching, Research and Publication are the three basic components of education system. New knowledge always been disseminated through research papers published in reputed journals with impact factor. In the present time of competitive world of science; career development of faculties is largely based on the scientific publications<sup>[1]</sup>. From the beginning of the careers, researchers get fastened with the citation nose-band with impact factor virtually dictating their future career path, preferring to be known, with their research papers published in high impact factor journals<sup>[2]</sup>.

Impact factor (IF) is a journal metric that reflects how many citations of a journal's papers published over a two-year period receive during the subsequent year. It is calculated by dividing the number of current year citations to the source items published in that journal during the previous two years<sup>[3]</sup>. The Journal IF coined by Eugene Garfield in the 1950s, was initially introduced as a tool to facilitate the librarians to choose which journals are read more often than others, and also to measure the significance of a scientific journal<sup>[4]</sup>, however, this has been transformed into judging an individual scientist's productivity. Higher the IF, higher the quality of a journal. Currently, IF issued only by Thomson Reuters and has an important role in Indian context. Emphasis is being given to IF when deciding promotions or while recruiting professionals afresh. Hence, all the researchers want their publications in journals with IFs issued by Thomson Reuters. Unfortunately, many agencies started giving journal metrics to sub-standard journals that became a matter of concern. Upcoming researchers unknowingly become pray for such dubious journal metrics. They should be vigilant towards such practices and carefully select genuine journals for their communications.

While IF is an important and relevant yardstick for the quality of a research journal; there are multiple dilemmas associated with Impact Factor. Journals that are in English language, open access journals, e-journals, being published monthly may get more citations than the offline journals, published less frequently and in regional languages. We must also understand that IF is not the only parameter to judge quality of a journal or a research paper. There are many other tools that can judge quality of scientific papers like Citation Counts, h-index, i10-index etc. that are unfamiliar for us. We may think on considering a few of such relevant metrics other than IF.

Few years back; University Grants Commission (UGC) has laid down Academic Performance Indicators (API) for Career Advancement Scheme (CAS), for promotions and for direct recruitments in Universities in India<sup>[5]</sup>. Besides other criteria; research publication is an essential requirement in this system and it became a measurable index for the individual performance. Followed by this; UGC released *Approved List of Journals*<sup>[6]</sup>, without providing any specific guidelines or definitions to understand what are 'National' or 'International' or 'Local' journals etc. Mere presence of word (such

as 'International') doesn't confer with it with a higher quality. Though it has been said that care has been taken; it doesn't appear by looking into the list of journals they approved. Simple accreditation and enlisting the journals in the list and approving their publications for promotions and annual appraisals may dilute the researches, pollute the science badly further damaging the science at international levels. It is a matter of serious concern here that the largest number of predatory article authorship and publishers is highly skewed with India at the top<sup>[7]</sup>.

Of late, considering complaints about credibility of such approved list; UGC's Standing Committee on Notification of Journals has found 4,305 journals to be of poor quality or to contain incorrect or insufficient information and has removed them from the approved list of some 30,000 publications. Although, it is a delayed step, should be welcomed. The Standing Committee of UGC should seriously look into the remaining journals also as early as possible<sup>[8]</sup>.

This API criterion is equally applicable to AYUSH systems too. In absence of indexed journals that exclusively promote Ayurveda researches; it become difficult to have sufficient number of published research articles by the faculty members and other researchers for their promotions or recruitments. Considering this publication driven promotions and annual appraisals, acute shortage of indexed Ayurveda journals and loopholes in the UGC guidelines; the society has witnessed mushrooming of casual or spurious or predatory journals with dubious journal metrics. Such low-standard journals guarantee a researcher a publication over the night. This ultimately produces poor publications, poorly taught generation that is a serious concern to the society and to the science. Proliferation of such journals made difficult to identify them from standard journals.

A couple of years back, Savitribai Phule Pune University has come out with a comprehensive policy on research publications, primarily to curb the growing tendency to publish papers in dubious and predatory journals, which, in turn, lowers the quality of research and affects the reputation of an institution<sup>[9]</sup>. Leading Ayurveda institutions, research organizations may consider these guidelines to frame their own policies that can prevent academic pollution. Responsible authorities for AYUSH education may look into this scenario, may design a roadmap, prepare exclusive list of journals that encourage AYUSH researches and authenticate them. This list of journals should be dynamic, reviewed periodically to make amendments. Publishers from different corners of the country / globe may be invited to submit details of their journals (through a format) for examination and possible addition into the AYUSH list of journals. Authors can think, check and select a suitable journal from this list for submitting their researches.

A thought of establishing an exclusive Publication Cell at central level has also been proposed with a vision to identify potential agencies / universities that can manage and improve quality of AYUSH journals. Development of communicating, writing and publishing skills in young Ayurveda researchers opined to be

pivotal<sup>[10]</sup>. This will possibly bring respectability for scientific publishing in Ayurveda.

The researches that get published over the nights will hamper the science as majority of times they involve with lowered quality and questionable ethics; while genuine and ethical ways to successful publications may be delayed, but always received positively by the science. Such standard publications honestly contribute to the society and science.

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