



Turkish Journals Removed from Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) in the Last 10 Years

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The idea of a directory of open access journals was proposed at the 2002 Nordic Conference on Scholarly Communication in Lund. Soon after, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) was launched on May 12, 2003, with 300 titles.¹ In the tenth year of its establishment, DOAJ has become a platform indexing approximately 10,000 journals. Currently with approximately 20,000 journals, DOAJ is the largest open access platform for journals.²

An open access system provides rapid and open access to scientific information and data. However, some publishers use this model for unethical purposes.³ It was only after 2010 that awareness of predatory journals and publishers began to grow.⁴ Legitimate indexes and directories began questioning themselves about dubious journals. DOAJ was one of the first to take steps in this regard.

In 2014, DOAJ introduced a new set of criteria and a new application form to exclude predatory journals and publishers. In May 2014, DOAJ announced that 99.3% of the approximately 10,000 indexed journals would have to reapply under the new criteria if they wished to remain indexed. As a result, 675 and 2,957 journals were removed from the list in 2015 and 2016, respectively.⁵ The efforts of DOAJ against predatory publishing have earned it recognition as a respected and trusted platform. A listing in DOAJ is one of the main criteria in “predatory journals algorithm” presented by WAME.

Unfortunately, Türkiye does not have a good reputation for predatory publishing and is among the top three countries in the world in terms of the number of journals, publications, and editors.⁶ Encouragingly, the Turkish Council of Higher Education has implemented deterrents⁷ and publishing in predatory journals has become a barrier to academic promotion.

In recent years, we have witnessed a rapid increase in the number of open access journals globally; especially, in countries such as Türkiye. This rapid increase is not driven by scientific concerns. Therefore, we investigated Turkish journals excluded from DOAJ

since 2014 and the reasons for exclusion. We obtained metadata with the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting protocol provided by DOAJ.⁸ Data were limited between March 19, 2014 and November 22, 2023. The data for journals that did not reapply to DOAJ for reindexation were obtained from a file provided by DOAJ. The ISSN information of the journals was scanned through the ISSN portal,⁹ and journals with Turkish addresses were selected. Descriptive statistical analyses were performed for the selected journals using Microsoft Excel.

A total of 348 Turkish journals were removed from DOAJ 359 times in the last 10 years (Figure 1). This number is 4.40% (348/7,911) of the total number of journals removed from DOAJ. In total, 11 journals were removed from DOAJ more than once. The reasons for the removal of Turkish journals are shown in Table 1. The most common reasons were “journal not adhering to best practice,” “failure to reapplication,” and “suspected editorial misconduct by publisher.” As of November 2023, 2.48% (500/20,161) of the total journals indexed in DOAJ are from Türkiye.

The reapplication project of DOAJ is the most radical and bold initiative by any index or directory. Similar to journals globally, journals in Türkiye were affected by the reapplication project of DOAJ. In 2016, 114 Turkish journals were removed from the index for not resubmitting to DOAJ. Marchitelli et al.⁵ reported a noticeable improvement in the quality of journals indexed in DOAJ with the new acceptance criteria and the reapplication project. However, some have criticized the delisting policy of DOAJ.^{10,11} According to Sun, some journals delisted from DOAJ were listed in the Q1 category of SCImago Journal & Country Rank.¹⁰ It does not seem reasonable to criticize the delisting policy of DOAJ without investigating the reason for delisting. Because DOAJ is more concerned with the transparency of business and publishing practices than the quality of peer review. As we all know, assessing the quality of peer review is currently not easy.¹² We acknowledge

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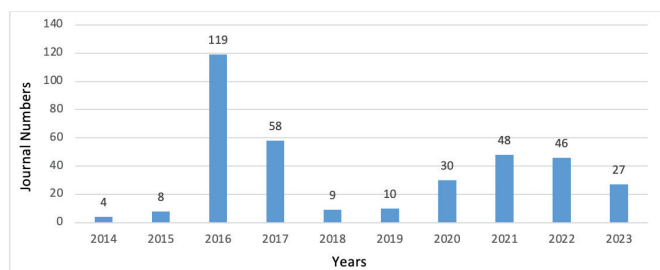


FIG. 1. The number of Turkish journals removed from DOAJ by year. A total of 348 Turkish journals were excluded from DOAJ on 359 occasions between 2104 and 2023. Eleven journals were excluded from DOAJ on multiple occasions across different years.

TABLE 1. Reasons for Removal of Turkish Journals from Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

	Reasons No (%)
Journal not adhering to best practice	143 (39.72)
Failure to reapplication in 2016	114 (31.67)
Suspected editorial misconduct by publisher	57 (15.83)
Website URL no longer works	27 (7.50)
Ceased publishing	10 (2.78)
Journal is no longer Open Access or inactive	6 (1.67)
No communication	2 (0.56)
Changed publisher but has not supplied new URL or site	1 (0.28)

*One journal was removed for two reasons.

that being delisted from DOAJ does not make a journal predatory, and being listed in DOAJ does not guarantee that a journal is not predatory.

Excluding the significant increase due to reapplication failure in 2016, the increase in the number of Turkish journals removed from DOAJ in recent years is remarkable. An average of 40 Turkish journals have been removed from DOAJ every year since 2020 (Figure 1). As mentioned earlier, the most common reason for the removal of Turkish journals from DOAJ is noncompliance with best practices and suspicion of editorial misconduct. We believe that the publication of hundreds of national journals in Türkiye is not due to scientific concerns. These journals also do not aim

to be international; However, they play a role in completing the academic promotion criteria of faculty members.

In conclusion, the removal of a journal from an index or directory should be taken as a warning sign by other national or international indexes and directories listing the same journal. We recommend that national and international indexes, including Türkiye's national Citation Database (*TR-Dizin*), closely monitor and review journals removed from other indexes, helping indexes to check themselves and each other.

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