
Failures in Academic Research Assessing the Frequenting of Predatory Journals by Some Nigerian Academics

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Accepted: 23 May 2025 | Published online: 28 May 2025

Abstract

Academic progress relies on integrity, and researchers must uphold rigorous standards to ensure knowledge advancement and informed decision-making. However, this foundation is threatened by the proliferation of predatory journals, which exploit the pressure to publish and undermine the credibility of scholarly work. For Nigerian academics, this challenge is compounded by limited awareness, institutional pressures, and scarce access to reputable outlets. This study investigates why Nigerian academics frequent predatory journals, exploring their motivations, consequences for research quality, and implications of this practice. Using an exploratory qualitative research design, the study collected data through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with selected academics at the Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria. Data generated from the interview were transcribed, and patterns were identified and organized according to the objectives of the research. The data were analyzed through enumeration, categorization, and thematic analysis. The results show that a significant proportion of Nigerian academics have published in predatory journals, driven by pressures to publish and a lack of awareness. The consequences of this practice include the dissemination of unreliable research, damage to academic reputation, and erosion of public trust. The study recommends urgent interventions to address this issue, including education and awareness campaigns, improved access to reputable journals, and stricter quality control measures.

Keywords: Academic Research; Failure; Frequenting; High Impact; Journals; Predatory

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Introduction

Scientific research remained one of the fundamental responsibilities of academics (Carter et al. 2018), and its impact is often measured by the volume and quality of publications produced (Ioannidis et al. 2014). These contributions not only reflect an academic's scholarly output but also their role in national and global development. For faculty in higher education, particularly universities, publishing in peer-reviewed journals is indispensable for career advancement (Fyfe et al. 2017). In many institutions, publication records serve as the primary criterion for promotion and appraisal (Stephens Balakrishnan 2013). The preference for peer-reviewed journals can be attributed to the faster publication process than monographs and books, which often require years to produce (Nederhof 2006). Additionally, academic journals offer several advantages, such as being published annually or biannually, peer reviewed, offering global visibility through online platforms, and most importantly, easily measurable impact metrics (Xu et al. 2019).

Journals' impact factor has become one of the fundamental parameters for the global rating of scholars (Frynas and Yamahaki 2016). Scientific ranking of journals has been regarded as a parameter for measuring to what extent (the frequency and number) articles are cited by scholars globally (Packalen and Bhattacharya 2017). Citations serve as essential markers of scholarly authority and credibility, both for individual articles and the journals that publish them (Mesgari et al. 2015). Journal impact factor is determined by the frequency with which an article published in a journal has been cited at least once in a year (Colepicolo 2015). It enhances the impact of an author's publications, fosters global recognition, and expands professional opportunities within academia (Vuong 2019). Consequently, publishing in high-impact journals becomes a primary objective for most academics, as it significantly enhances scholarly visibility and career advancement (Lillis and Curry 2018). Moreover, publishing in high-impact journals has become an essential requirement for academic career advancement and promotion within university systems (Miller 2017).

However, a common perception is that publishing in high-impact journals is challenging due to three key factors: their lengthy review processes, rigorous peer-review standards, and highly selective acceptance criteria that favor only the most outstanding

submissions (Wang et al. 2019). These challenges explain why some researchers, particularly those under pressure to publish, may opt for predatory journals rather than endure the rigorous scrutiny, prolonged review processes, and high rejection rates characteristic of high-impact publications (Cobey et al. 2019). A growing sentiment among some academics reflects concerning attitudes: "I prefer journals with faster turnaround times," and "I'm not yet qualified to publish in high-impact journals." This represents a fundamental flaw in academic research mentality—the self-defeating assumption that one's work does not merit rigorous global evaluation. Such attitudes not only compromise research integrity but also reflect a problematic undervaluation of scholarly potential.

Although comprehensive data on Nigerian academics publishing in predatory journals remains scarce, anecdotal reports indicate substantial engagement with these questionable outlets (Aboyade et al. 2024). Despite repeated warnings from the academic community, publication pressures—combined with limited awareness—continue to drive many Nigerian scholars toward predatory publishers (Mills and Branford 2022). The problem is compounded by these journals' deceptive practices, including the use of legitimate-sounding international titles that mask their predatory nature (Richtig et al. 2018). This study explores the prevalence of predatory journals and the reasons academics choose them over high-impact journals. It also analyzes how this preference for predatory journals and avoidance of high-impact ones can impact academic research outcomes.

Methods

Research Design

The study was conducted among the academics of the Federal University Gusau. This study uses an exploratory research design, with a qualitative approach—specifically, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)—to collect data from respondents.

Data Collection

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study. Data were collected through KIIs, involving face-to-face interactions with twenty-eight academics from the

university, four from each of the seven faculties. The interviews focused on the following questions: a) why academics frequent the predatory and avoid high-impact journals, and b) whether they regard frequenting the predatory and avoidance of high-impact journals as failure in academic research.

Data Analysis

The researchers clarified that the study was conducted solely for academic purposes, with no intent to victimize or single out any participant. Participants were informed that there would be no financial or material compensation for their involvement. They were also given the freedom to choose the time, date, and venue of the interviews to ensure comfort and convenience.

After data were generated from the interview, they were transcribed, and patterns were identified and organized according to the objectives of the research. Enumeration, categorization, and thematic analysis of data were made. Selected quotes were highlighted, coded, and sorted into themes based on the identified patterns.

To protect participants' identities while allowing for differentiation, a coding system was used: *Sani/KII/Academic/FUG*. Pseudonyms such as Daniel, Sani, Felix and Academic were used to identify the participant, with KII indicating the type of interview and FUG representing the acronyms of the university.

Population setting

Nigeria is a country in West Africa, located between the Sahel to the north and the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean to the south. It covers an area of 923,769 square kilometers (356,669 square miles) and has a population of over 230 million. Nigeria shares borders with Niger to the north, Cameroon to the east, and Benin to the west. Federal University Gusau is located in Zamfara State, one of the 36 states in Nigeria. Zamfara is situated in the northwestern region of the country.

Potential Biases:

Several potential biases should be acknowledged in this study's methodology. First, sampling bias may have occurred in the selection of key informants, as participants were potentially drawn from those most accessible or with particularly strong views on the topic. Factors such as age, gender, or institutional position could have influenced both who was selected and their perspectives, potentially skewing the results. Second, social desirability bias may have affected responses, with informants possibly providing answers they perceived as socially acceptable rather than fully honest accounts of their publishing practices. This could lead to significant underreporting of engagement with predatory journals.

Third, interviewer bias represents another limitation, as the researcher's own preconceptions and perspectives may have influenced both how questions were asked during interviews and how responses were interpreted. Finally, data analysis bias must be considered, as the researcher's subjective framework could shape the interpretation of findings. These potential biases highlight important limitations that should be taken into account when considering the study's conclusions.

Strategies to Mitigate Biases

To mitigate sampling bias, the researchers used a systematic approach to select key informants called purposive sampling. To address social desirability bias, the researchers used anonymous interviews to encourage honest responses. This is by using probing questions to encourage key informants to provide more detailed and honest responses. To reduce interviewer bias, the researchers used a structured interview protocol to ensure that all key informants were asked the same questions. To avoid data analysis bias, the researchers used a systematic approach to data analysis, such as coding and theme identification.

Results

The findings of the study are presented in two parts: the reasons why academics publish in predatory journals and avoid high-impact journals, and the perception of this behavior as a failure in academic research. A summary table is included to highlight the common themes identified across all responses. This is followed by selected verbatim quotations from participants to support and illustrate the themes.

Table 1: Summary of Research Questions and Findings

Research Question	Findings
1 Why academics frequent the predatory and avoid high impact journals	<p>1. This study found that the pervasive frequenting of predatory journals by the academics is partly due to some academics' reluctance to submit their papers to high-impact journals.</p> <p>2. The academic environment has put so much pressure on these academics that they just have to submit somewhere (any of the available international journals) for the purpose of getting their paper published.</p>
2 Whether they regard frequenting the predatory and avoidance of high-impact journals as failure in academic research	<p>1. The study found that publishing a well-conducted research study in a predatory journal reflects a failure on the part of the researcher or academic.</p> <p>2. The study found that some academics fear that their research may be rejected by high-impact journals. This fear is regarded as an initial failure that often leads to the eventual failure of submitting to a predatory journal.</p> <p>3. The study also discovered that it is a failure on the part of academics when they publish in a predatory journal because their research will not be cited.</p>

Source: Field study 2024

Why academics frequent the predatory and avoid high-impact journals

This study found that the frequent submission to predatory journals by academics is largely due to their reluctance to submit papers to high-impact journals. The academic environment exerts significant pressure on them to publish, leading many to submit their work to any available journal, regardless of its credibility. The primary concern, therefore, is to have their papers published—whether the journal is predatory or not is often seen as secondary. This is consistent with the findings of Huang, Pang, and Yu (2018), which revealed that academics are eager to submit their paper for publication.

However, it contradicts the findings of Kallio et al. (2016), which suggested that some academics prioritize enhancing their academic profiles in line with their peers, without regard for where their research is published. Some academics hold the preconceived notion that high-impact journals have stringent requirements that are difficult to meet. The fear of extensive scrutiny and the lengthy review process often discourages them from submitting to these journals. The study also found that many academics are driven by the need to meet university requirements for appraisals and promotions in their universities. These findings are consistent and closely related to the assertion and argument of Åkerlind (2005), Alvesson and Sandberg (2013), Mousavi and Abdollahi (2020), and McKenzie (2021).

This study further revealed significant disparities among academics in their capacity to identify reputable journals, primarily due to naivety, inexperience, and lack of awareness. Many participants mistook predatory international journals for high-impact outlets, often lured by the journals' deceptively prestigious editorial boards. These predatory journals strategically employ foreign-sounding names and fraudulent affiliations with institutions in Europe, America, or Asia—a tactic that disproportionately exploits early-career researchers from developing nations like Nigeria.

Additionally, the study identified a resistance among some academics to seeking guidance from senior colleagues, contributing to their continued engagement with predatory publishers. This overconfidence perpetuates a cycle of low-quality publications. These findings are similar to prior research (Hodson 2013; Wald et al. 2016; Bodolica and Spraggan 2018; McKelvey and Rake 2020; Ebadi et al. 2020; Tella 2020; Boncori 2020; Dekker and Kim 2022).

The following are responses from some of the participants:

"The truth is that some academics are reluctant to submit to high-impact journals. The pressure in the university environment may not permit academics to submit their research to high-impact journals. The major concern is to get the research published and enrich the CV. Remember also that those terms and conditions in the high-impact journals may not help academics achieve their desired progress, as the number of papers published matters a lot. The thoroughness; scrutiny and meticulousness that characterized the high-impact journals are discouraging to some academics as such they opted for the predatory journals for quick and unhindered publication." (Sani/KII/Academic/FUG)

"Some academics lack familiarity with established methods for identifying reputable journals. This may be as a result of their naivety and inexperience, and unawareness. Some are usually confused, and they misconstrue predatory journals for high-quality journals. Especially when these predatory journals have attractive editorial boards and pseudonyms that are mostly foreign and affiliations of universities that are located either in Europe, America, or Asia." (Daniel/KII/Academic/FUG)

"Some academics also problem with pride and ego. They are actually to learn many of these from their senior colleagues and collaborate with them. They will assist the younger or new academics to grow and improve, in terms of their manuscript and the right place to submit it to." (Kate/KII/Academic/FUG)

The Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) identified three key factors contributing to academics' engagement with predatory journals and avoidance of high-impact publications: reluctance to submit to rigorous journals, limited awareness of legitimate publishing practices, and resistance to seeking guidance from more experienced colleagues.

Responses on whether frequenting the predatory and avoiding high-impact journals is a failure in academic research

The study found that publishing rigorous research in predatory journals constitutes a significant scholarly failure. This practice effectively nullifies the research's potential impact, as findings published in such outlets typically receive neither global visibility nor meaningful academic engagement. High-quality research merits dissemination through

reputable, high-impact journals to ensure proper scrutiny and broader scholarly contribution. Regrettably, many robust studies end up in predatory publications, undermining their scientific value and reach. These findings are consistent with past research on the detrimental effects of predatory publishing (Opie 2018; Shaghaei et al. 2018; Grudniewicz et al. 2019; Gill 2021; Nwankwo et al. 2022).

The study also found that some academics fear their research may be rejected by high-impact journals. This fear is regarded as an initial failure that precedes the eventual failure of submitting to a predatory journal. Some scholars have settled for predatory journals because they believe their work would be subjected to intense scrutiny, rigorous evaluation, and possible rejection if submitted to reputable journals. There is also a prevailing notion among some academics that they are not worthy of publishing in high-impact or reputable journals. This is consistent with the observations and argument of Every-Palmer and Howick (2014), Gin et al. (2018), Jackson et al. (2018), and Tella (2020).

The study found that experiencing rejection or failure is essential for academics, as it provides an opportunity for improvement in research writing. Observations, scrutiny, and criticism from reviewers serve as valuable guidance and informal training, ultimately enhancing an academic's knowledge and capacity to publish in reputable journals. The study highlights the need for academics to understand the importance of criticism and failure. Recognizing the value of rejection can motivate them to submit their research to high-impact journals without fear or haste. This awareness can also help protect them from predatory journals, as they are more likely to take the time to verify the authenticity of a journal before submission. These findings align with past research by Horn (2016), Teixeira da Silva et al. (2018), Manley (2019), Downes (2020), Kumar et al. (2021), Mills (2021), Dwivedi et al. (2022), and Nejadghanbar et al. (2023).

The study also found that publishing in predatory journals represents a failure on the part of academics, as such research is often not cited. Researchers generally do not consult predatory journals for credible or valuable information. There is a prevailing belief that these journals are fraudulent and of low quality. While some research published in predatory journals may contain important or relevant insights, its credibility is often dismissed due to the outlet in which it appears. This is a significant setback for academics, as the research

community typically disregards work published in low-quality journals, and such journals are not indexed due to their lack of scholarly standards. The study also revealed that academics may experience failure in the form of being scammed—paying publication fees to predatory journals without their work being published, or having it published without any peer review. This can result in the dissemination of unvetted content, potentially harming the academic's reputation and career. These findings are consistent with the findings in past studies (e.g., Nicholas et al. 2017; Sorokowski et al. 2017; Demir 2018; Matumba et al. 2019; Amutuhaire 2022; Walters 2022; Yeo et al. 2022).

The following are some of the responses from the interviewee:

"The most challenging aspect is that researchers conduct good research and eventually get it published in a predatory journal. This is actually not encouraging, and it is disheartening because eventually the findings or results die off locally. It may not be assessed globally and would not be beneficiary to the wider world. The best concept to use in describing the situation is failure. This is a failure on the part of the academics who decided to submit an article to where it will not be of any use." (Ralph/KII/Academic/FUG)

"Some among us academics are scared that their research may be rejected. What is the basis of writing, and why will someone not criticize? Criticism improves one's ability and potential. The fact that academics are scared of being criticized is nothing but a failure in itself. We learn from our mistakes, if we are scared of being put through then we have actually failed." (Kef/KII/Academic/FUG)

"Some scholars felt the best way to avoid criticism is by avoiding the high-impact journals. But it is also pertinent to know that the patronage of the predicated journals remained the greatest failure that could happen to any academic. What is the basis of submitting a paper to a predatory journal in a bid to avoid being criticized? The failure that comes in the form of rejection is better than the failure of publishing with a predatory journal. Academics should know that scientific advancement is structured on failure, and it is worth experiencing. If we are scared of failure then we should not be described as scientists." (Pate/KII/Academic/FUG)

"Academics should also know that observations, scrutiny, and criticism improve our quality of guidance and training. This will subsequently enrich the quality of our research; therefore, our fear of failure should not be a basis for submitting a paper to a predatory journal." Faith/KII/Academic/FUG

"The fact that some academics are unaware, eager, and naïve to explore high-impact journals or misconstrue predicated journals as high-impact journals is an element of failure. This is a failure on their part of academics. This is because academics are expected to learn from their senior colleagues. The consequence of not consulting the highly experienced academics is a failure. It is a failure on the part of academics not to have taken time to explore and discover the authenticity of a journal as well as to learn from the highly experienced academics." (Abu/KII/Academic/FUG)

"Academics have actually failed to publish in a predatory journal because their research works are less likely to be cited in such journals. Researchers do not assess predicated journals for information. The notion of predicated journals as fake and fraudulent is pervasive as no any scholars who know his or her would cite such low-quality and untrustworthy journals. It is therefore a failure on the part of academics to publish with predicated journals." (Salman/KII/Academic/FUG)

"Academics are been scammed, deceived, and cajoled to pay a huge amount of money. However, this is unfortunate, as sometimes their research is not eventually published or published without being assessed, which can be damaging to the career of the academics." (Abula/KII/Academic/FUG)

The KIIs revealed that submitting a paper to a predatory journal is, in itself, a form of failure. Publishing in such a journal constitutes another failure, and the lack of recognition or assessment by the global academic community further compounds this failure for the academic involved.

Literature Reviews

This section highlights and reviews literature on predatory and high-impact journals. It explores the reasons why academics tend to publish in predatory journals while avoiding high-impact ones. It also examines how this pattern is viewed as a failure within the context of academic research.

Predatory Journals and High-Impact Journals Predatory

Predatory journals have been conceptualized by some scholars as “pseudo journals”, which refer to unethical publications (Ghasemi et al. 2023) that employ deceptive practices to exploit researchers. These publications have been variously described as fraudulent (Koerber et al. 2020) and fundamentally misleading in their representation of standard publishing protocols (Sharma et al. 2023). The features of predatory publishing practices have been identified to include, but not limited to, the following: false peer reviewing; fake editorial board; apparent violations of copyright; Exploitative fee structures without corresponding publishing ethics (Guerra-Pujol 2017). A hallmark of predatory journals is their abnormally rapid article acceptance, which stems from the absence of rigorous peer review and their primary focus on financial gain rather than scholarly quality (Richtig et al. 2018). Consequently, an excessively high acceptance rate has been identified as a key indicator of predatory operations (McCann and Michael 2018), with some accepting virtually all submissions without rejection (Shehata and Elgllab 2018). Ultimately, these journals prioritize revenue from publication fees over academic integrity, demonstrating complete disregard for research quality (Wallace and Perri 2018).

Predatory journals have become increasingly complex, pervasive, and widespread (Shamseer et al. 2017). This complexity has made it difficult to accurately identify and monitor their activities. Between 2010 and 2014, there was a significant rise in the number of journals classified as predatory (Akça and Mehmet 2021). For instance, Beall's list of predatory journals reportedly grew from 53,000 in 2010 to 420,000 in 2014. This rapid increase has been identified as a global threat to academic disciplines, not limited to Nigeria or Africa alone (Rupp et al. 2019). However, studies suggest that academics in Africa and Asia are more likely to publish in predatory journals than their counterparts in other regions (Kurt 2018).

Predatory journals are often described as online outlets that deviate from established academic publishing standards (Reiter and Klenk 2019). A major concern is that these journals frequently violate scholarly norms, leading to the perception that both contributors and their affiliated institutions are pursuing low-credibility, low-ranking platforms for publication (Vessuri et al. 2014). As a result, predatory journals have earned a negative

reputation for themselves and the researchers associated with them (Tennant et al. 2019). Many of these journals were created with the intent to promote specific scholars or to help achieve targeted academic rankings (Klettner et al. 2016). Once these objectives are met, however, there is often little commitment to maintaining the journal's quality or continuity, leading some to cease publication after just one or a few issues (Perry 2020).

Predatory journals operate primarily as profit-driven enterprises that fundamentally lack academic credibility. As Leeson and Leeson (2019) demonstrate, these publications systematically exploit researchers by disseminating pseudo-scholarship without proper quality control. Research submitted to predatory journals often does not undergo rigorous peer review. These journals sometimes publish as many as 25 to 35 papers in a single edition (Govaerts et al. 2021). Practices like this, along with other questionable standards, contribute to the perception that such journals promote mediocrity in academic publishing. It raises concerns about how nearly every paper submitted to these outlets ends up being published, regardless of quality.

It has been observed that the predatory journals have become pervasive in the Nigerian academic environment (Moses and William 2022). While it has also been observed that Nigerian scholars have published widely and globally (Omobowale et al. 2014). However, empirical evidence shows that many young Nigerian academics are frequenting predatory journals more than high-impact ones (Mathew and Patel 2022). Some findings suggest that this trend is driven by desperation to meet institutional promotion requirements, leading scholars to publish in any available outlet regardless of quality (Mills and Kristina 2021)

High-Impact Journals

High-Impact Journals came into prominence in 1975 and were introduced by Eugene Garfield (Lathabai et al. 2015) to help university librarians select reputable academic journals. However, the term has since been globally redefined to refer to journals that serve as indicators of academic success through specific evaluative metrics. High-impact Journals are characterized by having an "impact factor," which is used to assess journal quality based

on the number of annual citations of articles published (Jackson, Haigh, and Watson, 2009; Pisoschi and Pisoschi, 2016).

Journals' annual impact factor is calculated by dividing the total number of times that the articles from the last two years have been cited in that year (Roldan-Valadez et al., 2019). This is calculated with the total number of citable articles from the journal in the last two years. These figures are announced every year. The higher a journal's impact factor, the more reputable, relevant, and important it is (Kaldas, Michael, Hanna, and Yousef 2020). It is therefore apparent that authors seeking recognition aim to publish their research in high-impact journals. Globally, it is also acknowledged that publishing in such journals requires producing high-quality research (Minasny et al. 2020). High-impact journals are expected to possess certain features, including having competent and committed editorial boards, a chief editor who is often a renowned scholar, and a unique and valid registration number (Moher et al. 2016). However, some scholars have criticized the lengthy publication timelines often associated with high-impact journals.

Why Academics Frequent the Predatory and Avoid High-Impact Journals

Some academics are reluctant to submit their work to high-impact journals (McKenzie 2021). The academic environment has placed considerable pressure on them, leading some to disregard whether a particular journal is predatory or not (Mousavi and Abdollahi 2020). In many cases, the main concern is enriching academic profiles in line with their peers, without much consideration for the credibility of the publication outlet (Åkerlind 2005). High-impact journals often impose specific terms and conditions that can make it difficult for academics to publish their work quickly (Kallio, Kallio, Tienari, and Hyvönen 2016). It is pertinent to note that academics career progress of academics depends on the number of papers published. (Huang, Pang, and Yu 2018) As a result, many academics feel compelled to publish quickly, especially during periods of promotion and appraisal when it is time for promotions and appraisals (Alvesson and Sandberg 2013)

Scholars have observed notable variations in academics' ability to identify and engage with reputable journals (McKelvey and Rake 2020). In some cases, naivety, inexperience, or a lack of awareness prevents academics from understanding the importance of targeting

high-impact journals for their submissions (Bodolica and Spraggon 2018). There are critical misconceptions and misconstruing of the predatory journals as good journals by some academics, and these have been attributed to the perceived success of such journals (Dekker and Kim 2022). Fake editorial boards maintained by these journals tend to attract inexperienced scholars (Ebadi, Ashtarian, and Zamani 2020), particularly from developing countries, who are misled by fabricated names, foreign affiliations, and purported connections to institutions in Europe, America, or Asia (Tella 2020).

Additionally, some academics avoid learning from senior colleagues due to arrogance or a lack of willingness to collaborate. This reluctance often results in missed opportunities to revise and improve manuscripts that have been rejected by high-impact journals (Boncori 2020). In contrast, collaboration with experienced scholars has been identified as essential for navigating the publication process in reputable outlets (Wald et al. 2016). Nevertheless, the rigorous peer review, thorough scrutiny, and extended timelines typical of high-impact journals tend to discourage some academics; as such, they opted for the predicated journals for quick and unhindered publication. (Hodson 2013)

Frequenting Predatory and Avoiding High-Impact Journals: Failure in Academic Research

Concerns have been raised about how rigorous research can end up in predatory journals (Gill 2021)—a practice akin to ‘winking in the dark’. It has been noted that for every good academic research, there are good high-impact journals that could get it published (Opie 2018).

Regrettably, many high-quality studies have been published in predatory journals (Grudniewicz et al. 2019). This unfortunate situation leads to valuable findings remaining obscure, as they fail to undergo rigorous global assessment and thus cannot benefit the wider scientific community (Shaghaei et al. 2018). The fundamental problem is that some academics are afraid that their research might be rejected by high-impact journals, which could best be described as a fear of failure (Nwankwo, Odiachi, and Anene 2022).

Some scholars felt it is better to submit their articles to the predatory journals than to submit to high-impact journals where their papers may undergo rigorous peer review, requiring

meticulous scrutiny, and often face multiple rejections before achieving publication (Jackson et al. 2018). This phenomenon explains why some scholars adopt the mindset of "I would rather submit where my paper will receive quick acceptance" or "I am not yet ready to publish in high-impact journals." Such attitudes have been characterized as detrimental to academic research (Every-Palmer and Howick 2014). However, scholars must recognize that scientific progress is fundamentally built upon failure—an experience that is not only inevitable but valuable (Gin et al. 2018). If academics do not want to experience failure, then they should not be described as scientists (Tella 2020).

Scholars have similarly argued that experiencing rejection or failure is a necessary part of academic research (Horn 2016). Such setbacks can lead to the refinement and improvement of research work (Dwivedi et al. 2022). Through reviewer observations, scrutiny, and constructive criticism, authors receive valuable guidance that can enhance their manuscripts and increase the likelihood of publication in reputable journals (Kumar et al. 2021). However, some academics are averse to criticism, delays, or the prospect of rejection, and prefer to avoid the rigorous peer review processes often associated with high-impact journals (Teixeira da Silva et al. 2018). Unfortunately, this fear of failure or rejection has been identified as a key reason why some academics eventually submit their paper to a predatory journal (Mills et al. 2021).

Unawareness and eagerness have also been identified as key reasons why some academics may be tempted to submit their work to predatory journals (Manley 2019). When researchers are in a hurry to publish, they may fail to recognize deceptive practices and overlook red flags that indicate a journal is predatory (Downes 2020). This lack of diligence reflects a failure on the part of the researcher to properly assess the authenticity of a journal (Nejadghanbar, Hu, and Babadi 2023). Although this failure has negative consequences, however, academics should learn from the mistake and ensure a thorough investigation when attempting to submit to avoid similar mistakes in the future.

Publishing in a predatory journal is also considered a failure on the part of academics, as research published in such outlets is significantly less likely to be cited (Amutuhaire 2022). Good researchers are less likely to frequent such journals for important information (Walters 2022). These journals are widely perceived as fraudulent and lacking academic

rigor, rendering them untrustworthy (Sorokowski et al. 2017). Unfortunately, some articles published in such predatory journals may contain important research findings; however, research communities may not consider them for citations because they have been published by low-quality journals (Demir 2018). Moreover, major citation databases typically do not index predatory journals, further limiting the accessibility and impact of the research they contain (Yeo, Renandya, and Tangkiengsirisin 2022). Therefore, this in itself is a failure on the part of academics.

An academic may also face academic failure through predatory journal scams (Matumba et al. 2019). These deceptive practices may involve collecting publication fees without subsequently publishing the work or publishing articles without proper peer review. Such experiences can significantly damage researchers' careers and create broader systemic issues that hinder scientific advancement (Nicholas et al. 2017).

Conclusion

The proliferation of predatory journals poses a significant threat to the integrity of academic research, and Nigerian academics are not immune to this phenomenon. This study has provided insight into the motivations, consequences, and implications of Nigerian academics frequenting predatory journals. The findings suggest that pressures to publish and a lack of awareness drive many academics to publish in these journals, resulting in the dissemination of unsound research, deterioration of professional credibility, and weakening of public confidence in academic scholarship. The study's recommendations for education and awareness campaigns, improved access to reputable journals, and stricter quality control measures are crucial in addressing this issue. Academic institutions, research funding agencies, and policymakers must take action immediately to promote a culture of research integrity and prevent the proliferation of predatory journals. Ultimately, the integrity of academic research relies on the collective responsibility of all stakeholders, including researchers, institutions, publishers, and policymakers. Through collaborative efforts to uphold rigorous standards and ethical practices, it is possible to safeguard the quality and credibility of scholarly work and maintain public trust in academic research.

Practical Recommendations

The findings offer the following recommendations. First, there should be education and awareness campaigns for academics on the implications of publishing in a predatory journal. Second, there should be improved access to reputable journals and stricter quality control measures that will ultimately address the issue. Third, academic institutions, research funding agencies, and policymakers must take urgent action that will promote a culture of research integrity and prevent the proliferation of predatory journals. Finally, the integrity of academic research depends on the collective efforts of all stakeholders. Therefore, it is pertinent to work together to ensure that research is conducted and disseminated responsibly and ethically, and that the public trust in academic research is maintained.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies may explore the role of institutional pressures, such as promotion and tenure requirements, in driving academics to publish in predatory journals. Future research could also develop and evaluate effective strategies for educating academics about the risks of predatory journals and promoting awareness of research integrity. Lastly, future research could examine the impact of predatory journals on important sectors such as public health, including the dissemination of flawed research and the erosion of public trust.

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