



THE NIGERIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

NAS Webinar Series: Webinar 12

STOP THE SCAM

**Safeguarding Academic
Integrity in Nigeria**



Webinar Discourse

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About the Nigerian Academy of Science

The Nigerian Academy of Science (NAS) is the foremost independent scientific body in Nigeria, which was established in 1977, and incorporated in 1986. NAS is uniquely positioned to bring scientific knowledge to bear on the policies/strategic direction of the country and is dedicated to the development and advancement of science, technology, and innovation (STI) in Nigeria. The aims and objectives of the Academy are to promote the growth, acquisition, and dissemination of scientific knowledge, and to facilitate its use in solving problems of national interest. The Academy strives to do this by:

- Providing advice on specific problems of scientific or technological nature presented to it by the government and its agencies, as well as private organizations.
- Bringing to the attention of the government and its agencies problems of national interest that science and technology can help solve.
- Establishing and maintaining the highest standards of scientific endeavours and achievements in Nigeria, through the publication of journals, organization of conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposia, recognition of outstanding contributions to science in Nigeria, and the development of a working relationship with other national and international scientific bodies and academies.

As with national academies in other countries, NAS is a not-for-profit organization with a total membership (since inception) comprising 308 Fellows, elected through a highly competitive process, who have distinguished themselves in their fields, both locally and internationally. Some of her members have served as Vice-Chancellors of universities, Directors-General of government Parastatals and Ministers in federal ministries. The Academy, given its influence, also can attract other experts from around the country and internationally when needed.

NAS is Nigeria's national representative on such bodies as the International Science Council (ISC) – the umbrella body for all science associations and unions – and the Inter-Academy Partnership (IAP) – the umbrella body for all national science academies globally. The Academy is also a member of the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC). Regionally, the Nigerian Academy of Science is one of eight founding academies of the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC) and has served on its Executive Committee until date. The Academy has played a major role in the development and establishment of academies in Africa.

As the peak independent scientific body in Nigeria, the Academy serves as the umbrella body for all science associations in the country, speaking for the same within and outside the country. The Academy holds periodic meetings with representatives of the associations to discuss the state of science in Nigeria and proffer solutions for improvement.

Introduction

The Nigerian Academy of Science (NAS) held the 12th edition of its webinar series on Wednesday, 3rd September 2025, themed, “*Stop the Scam: Safeguarding Academic Integrity in Nigeria.*” The objectives of the webinar were to disseminate the key findings and recommendations of the NAS consensus study, *Predatory Academic Practices (PAPs) and Nigeria: Stemming the Tide*, promoting awareness and collective responsibility towards safeguarding academic and research integrity in Nigeria. The event was attended by a diverse audience (140 attendees) comprising representatives from tertiary institutions, research institutes, science associations, libraries, private organizations, and the public.

The proceedings began with welcome remarks by Dr. Oladoyin Odubanjo, Executive Secretary of the Academy, who emphasized the urgency of addressing predatory academic practices. He noted that Nigeria is among the countries most affected by this problem, which undermines the integrity of research and, by extension, erodes the credibility of the scientific evidence on which policymakers depend. He reiterated that, as the foremost independent scientific body in Nigeria, the NAS is committed to driving evidence-informed policymaking. However, such policymaking can only be effective if the underlying evidence is credible and robust. It is for this reason that the Academy has been actively engaged with the issue of predatory academic practices through various initiatives, including the PAPs and Nigeria consensus study- a consensus study being a multidisciplinary process that convenes experts to critically examine a problem and propose actionable recommendations. He noted that the study, which was concluded in 2024, produced a comprehensive report now freely accessible on the NAS website. He added that some members of the study committee would be presenting at the webinar to provide deeper insights into the nature of predatory academic practices, their impact on research integrity, and practical strategies to address them. He concluded his remarks by welcoming the President of the Academy to deliver his opening address.

The President of NAS, Professor Abubakar Sambo FAS, in his opening remarks, expressed his delight that the webinar had commenced as scheduled. He reaffirmed that the Academy takes the issue of predatory academic practices very seriously, given the harmful threat they pose to academic and research integrity. He emphasized that, over the past few years, the Academy has undertaken three major initiatives to confront this challenge:

1. A Capacity Strengthening Webinar – organized in partnership with the Nigerian Young Academy (NYA), the webinar aimed to raise awareness about predatory academic practices, particularly among early-career researchers. This webinar highlighted the detrimental effects of PAPs on Nigerian scholarship and the wider scientific community, while also providing participants with practical tools and resources for identifying and avoiding predatory journals and conferences.

2. A Policy Roundtable – convened to sensitize policymakers on the impact of predatory academic practices on Nigeria’s scientific advancement, to identify policies and actions that higher education institutions and other stakeholders can adopt, and to foster collaboration in addressing this challenge
3. A Consensus Study – conducted by the Academy, in collaboration with the Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL) and the NYA, to examine the science publishing landscape in Nigeria, highlighting the drivers of predatory practices and their impact on scientific scholarship; to define the roles of key stakeholders (including policymakers, higher education institutions, scientific unions and associations, academic libraries, researchers, and others) in addressing predatory publishing; to propose a framework for a national journal index with minimum standards for Nigerian journal publications; and to proffer policy recommendations for curbing predatory academic practices and strengthening science publishing in Nigeria.

He informed participants that the webinar was convened to further discuss the findings of the consensus study and share its recommendations with stakeholders. He expressed the Academy’s hope that these deliberations would be valuable in safeguarding academic integrity and advancing science in Nigeria. Professor Sambo encouraged all participants to engage with honesty and openness, acknowledging that while the pressure to publish is real and may, sometimes, tempt researchers toward predatory outlets, only credible and genuine publications stand the test of time and contribute meaningfully to knowledge.

Subsequently, Professor Oye Gureje FAS, Chair of the NAS Consensus Study Committee on PAPs, delivered a presentation on *‘PAPs and Nigeria: Overview of the Consensus Study.’* This was followed by Dr. Richard Ibor, Research Associate to the Committee, who presented on *‘Key Findings: Profile of Predatory Publishing in Nigeria’*. Professor Cynthia Ibeto, a member of the Committee, spoke on *‘The Way Forward: Recommendations and Policy Directions.’* The webinar was moderated by Professor Ayodeji Olukoju FNAL, also a member of the study committee.

PAPs and Nigeria: Overview of the Consensus Study

The following were key points from this presentation:

1. The Committee was inaugurated in March 2023 with a mandate to examine predatory academic practices in Nigeria and recommend strategies for stemming the tide. It was multidisciplinary in composition, with active participation from colleagues from NAS, NAL, and the NYA, and the policy sector, including the National Librarian whose contributions were pivotal to the deliberations that shaped the study report.
2. The Committee’s terms of reference covered: assessing the current state of academic publishing in Nigeria, highlighting successes, challenges, and prospects; examining the

evolution of predatory practices in the country, including their trends and unique drivers; evaluating awareness levels of various stakeholders (policymakers, higher institutions, unions, and researchers); analyzing the interplay between open access publishing and predatory publishing, where overlaps often occur; reviewing existing institutional and governmental policies on combating predatory practices-their effectiveness and potential gaps; and, finally, exploring the feasibility of developing a national journal index to strengthen Nigeria's scholarly publishing landscape.

3. For this study, predatory academic practices were defined as publishing outlets-particularly journals and conferences that employ deceptive means to solicit contributions in exchange for money. Their primary objective is financial gain rather than scholarly advancement. Key features include the use of false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial standards, lack of transparency, absence of rigorous peer review, and aggressive solicitation of articles or conference participation. However, it is important to note the growing overlap between reputable and predatory outlets, which makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish between them. This blurring of boundaries underscores the need for vigilance from all stakeholders.
4. The process followed adhered strictly to NAS guidelines for consensus study reports. The Committee held its sole in-person meeting on May 3, 2023, during which all members declared any conflicts of interest and biases. At this meeting, the timeline, methodology, and need for research support were identified. The NAS secretariat graciously provided this support through Dr. Richard Ibor, who worked closely with the committee throughout the study.
5. The methodology rested on three main approaches:
 - **Literature Review** – Guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) standards and focused on sources such as Google Scholar (the most locally accessible platform), African Journals Online, Jeffrey Beall's evolving lists, and references suggested by survey respondents.
 - **Questionnaire Survey** – A survey was distributed nationwide to researchers, librarians, administrators, and academics, exploring their awareness, publishing history, and experiences with predatory outlets. A total of 207 responses were received.
 - **National Workshop** – A stakeholder's workshop was held virtually on September 6, 2023, with participation from journal editors, senior academics, and university leaders. Discussions focused on Nigeria's publishing landscape, the profile of predatory practices, stakeholder roles, and the feasibility of a national journal index.

6. This work builds on both global and national efforts. Internationally, the Inter-Academy Partnership published a landmark report in 2020 on combating predatory journals and conferences. Nationally, NAS had previously engaged with the issue through a 2022 policy roundtable and a webinar, both of which provided valuable background and context for the present study.
7. After gathering evidence, Dr. Ibor and the committee's chairman prepared the initial draft of the report, which then underwent several rounds of review by the committee, the NAS secretariat, and external peer reviewers. These iterative inputs were invaluable in refining and strengthening the final version, which was published last year.

Key Findings: Profile of Predatory Publishing in Nigeria

Key points from this presentation are as follows:

1. Between 2010 and 2014, the number of predatory publications rose from about 53,000 to 420,000 globally. Alarming, two-thirds of these came from Africa and Asia, with countries such as India, Nigeria, and Pakistan leading. This raises significant concern.
2. Despite Africa contributing about 2% of global research output, the continent accounts for only 0.1% of patents. Nigeria has one of the highest levels of research activity in Africa, but its impact is limited. Nigeria ranks 50th globally in terms of number of papers published, but when measured by research quality and impact, the country ranks poorly. The expansion of universities in Nigeria to about 170 has not translated into growth in innovative research. A major cause of this weakness is the high volume of publications appearing in predatory journals.
3. There are notable successes in Nigeria's publishing landscape. Research output has increased, and there are some reputable journals being published in Nigeria. The open access movement has also gained ground. In addition, capacity-building efforts including leadership programs, workshops, trainings, and mentorship opportunities have strengthened the system. There have also been more collaborations, government-backed initiatives like Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), and global quality assurance frameworks such as Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) being adopted. Furthermore, some universities now provide incentives for high-quality publications, rewarding researchers who publish in Q1 journals (academic publications ranked in the top 25% of journals within their subject category).
4. However, significant challenges remain. Many publications are driven by the pursuit of professional promotion rather than solving societal problems. Research expertise and resources are limited, and government funding is inadequate - only about 0.1% of Nigeria's

GDP goes to research, compared to 0.8% in South Africa. Additionally, research findings are often not translated into policy, many projects remain unpublished or shelved, and brain drain continues to deplete capacity.

5. Several factors drive predatory publishing in Nigeria:
 - Lack of awareness among young researchers.
 - Weak or unenforced regulations with no clear penalties for publishing in predatory outlets.
 - Pressure to publish in “international journals” rather than local ones.
 - Poor quality of research outputs, making acceptance in credible journals difficult.
 - Lack of funding for open access journals.
 - Deceptive marketing by predatory publishers.
6. From the national survey of 217 respondents, we found that while 89% of researchers are aware of predatory practices, about 32% admitted to having published articles in such journals. Surprisingly, 20% were unsure if they had. About 91% agreed that predatory publishing is a serious problem, yet 41% indicated that their institutions have no penalties in place, while 36% were unaware of any penalties. This shows an urgent need for institutional reforms. The survey also revealed that many Nigerian researchers are willing to publish in journals on a national index. This suggests the time may be right to develop a Nigerian national indexing system to strengthen the credibility of local journals.
7. In conclusion, the stakeholders meeting of September 2023 recommended three broad areas of action:

I. Infrastructure

- Develop stronger research infrastructure
- Foster academic mentoring
- Establish a national indexing system through Nigerian libraries

II. Resources

- Provide resources to support quality publishing
- Strengthen local journals
- Emphasize research quality over sheer publication numbers

III. Assessment Practices

- NUC and universities should enforce promotion criteria based primarily on the quality of publications
- Set national benchmarks for academic promotion
- Recognize and reward collaborative, impactful research

8. Only by addressing these issues can Nigeria safeguard academic integrity, improve research quality, and ensure that scholarship contributes meaningfully to national development and global science.

The Ways Forward: Recommendations and Policy Directions

Key points from this presentation include:

1. The consensus study established that predatory academic practices are widespread across Nigeria and across disciplines: sciences, engineering, social sciences, arts, etc.
2. By excluding peer review in favour of financial gain, these practices promote mediocrity and poor research quality, waste scarce material and human resources, damage the credibility of Nigerian science at home and abroad, as well as foster public distrust in academic work. The committee was unanimous: there is an urgent need to stem the tide through coordinated, multi-stakeholder action.
3. The following are the committee's recommendations for addressing predatory academic practices (PAPs) in Nigeria:
 - a. **Researchers**
 - i. Build capacity to identify predatory outlets and avoid them.
 - ii. Decline invitations to serve as reviewers or conference participants for predatory platforms.
 - iii. Support enforcement of institutional policies against research misconduct, including sanctions where necessary.
 - b. **Academic Institutions**
 - i. Provide continuous education on responsible and ethical research conduct.
 - ii. Strengthen mentorship structures to build integrity in the next generation.
 - iii. Shift assessment criteria from quantity of publications to quality, including grants, editorial work, and impact.
 - iv. Mandate plagiarism detection tools and sanction involvement in predatory practices.
 - c. **Academic Libraries**
 - i. Guide researchers in identifying predatory outlets.
 - ii. Stop subscriptions to journals from predatory publishers.
 - iii. Provide access to at least one reputable global indexing platform (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science).
 - iv. Advocate digital publishing of Nigerian university journals to improve quality and global visibility.

- v. Collaborate with NAS and the National Library to build a national journal index listing both credible and questionable outlets.
 - d. **National Academies**
 - i. Keep sustained attention on evolving predatory practices.
 - ii. Ensure publications in predatory outlets are excluded from awards, prizes, and fellowship considerations.
 - e. **National Universities Commission (NUC)**
 - i. Conduct regular audits of Nigerian journals and share findings widely.
 - ii. Include assessment of predatory practices during accreditation exercises.
 - iii. Encourage institutions to exclude predatory publications from promotion criteria.
 - f. **Government**
 - i. Strengthen national research funding institutions-ensuring transparent, merit-based access to grants.
 - ii. Consider publishing a blacklist of scholars guilty of misconduct, as deterrence.
 - iii. Subsidize or directly fund institutional access to reputable databases (Scopus, Web of Science), given the prohibitive foreign exchange cost.
4. Predatory practices will only be curbed if there is collective action to promote and safeguard academic integrity. Other countries-China, the US, South Africa- have shown that progress is possible with the right policies and sustained effort. Nigeria must do the same. Academic integrity is not optional: it is a national development necessity. Protecting academic integrity means producing a workforce, knowledge base, and innovations that can be trusted, both locally and globally.

Discussions and Recommendations

Following the presentations, participants engaged in a robust discussion through questions, comments, and contributions. The discussions revolved around the following key themes:

1. **Discouraging patronage of predatory journals:** Participants emphasized the need for institutional mechanisms to discourage engagement with predatory outlets. A key recommendation was the establishment of research ethics committees in all higher education institutions. These committees should be mandated to develop and enforce research policies, monitor adherence to ethical standards, and provide continuous sensitization for faculty and students. This will foster integrity and accountability, thereby reducing the tendency to submit to predatory journals.
2. **Number of predatory journals in Nigeria:** It was noted that determining the exact number of predatory journals is difficult, as the landscape is constantly changing. While creating a national list would be nearly impossible, researchers were encouraged to evaluate journals against established red flags. Institutions should maintain internal lists of

acceptable outlets to guide assessments for promotion and protect researchers from falling victim of predatory journals.

3. **Predatory conferences:** Participants agreed that conferences present an even greater challenge than journals, as they are far more numerous and difficult to regulate. Researchers often receive unsolicited invitations to present, chair sessions, or serve as honorary speakers. Red flags include poor grammar on websites, excessively broad conference themes, unverifiable advertised speakers, unjustifiably high registration fees, and absence of peer review processes. Researchers were advised to verify speakers and exercise caution when considering such invitations.
4. **Citations and visibility:** Predatory journals increasingly mimic legitimate outlets, claiming peer review, listing editorial boards, and advertising fabricated impact factors. Citations from such outlets carry little weight and do not add meaningful impact to a researcher's profile. The bigger concern is the loss of visibility when good work is cited only in outlets that are not widely read or recognized. Participants stressed the importance of verifying whether claimed impact factors originate from credible indexing services like Web of Science or Scopus.
5. **Funding and access to research tools:** Participants highlighted the link between inadequate funding and poor research quality. Adequate funding is essential for quality outputs that can meet international standards. Institutions were urged to provide access to plagiarism detection software (e.g., Turnitin) and subscription databases (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science), which both strengthen research quality and guide publication decisions.
6. **Promotion benchmarks and national standards:** Much of Nigerian research is driven by promotion requirements, yet a lack of uniform benchmarks, especially from the NUC, means institutions apply inconsistent standards. Participants recommended that the NUC establish and enforce a national benchmark for academic promotion, ensuring consistency, accountability, and discouragement of predatory practices.
7. **Predatory journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science:** While rare, some journals that began with questionable practices may transition into more credible outlets and eventually be indexed in Scopus or Web of Science. However, given the rigorous indexing process, the likelihood of truly predatory journals being included remains very low.
8. **Enforcement and leadership:** Participants noted that only institutions led by genuine scholars rather than "academic politicians" can effectively uphold standards.
9. **Engaging predatory publishers:** Suggestions to directly engage identified predatory publishers were considered impractical. Such outlets are profit-driven and unlikely to cease operations upon request. A more effective strategy is to sensitize researchers and potential authors, equipping them to avoid predatory outlets altogether.

10. **Awareness and dissemination strategies:** Two main approaches were discussed; a massive media campaign (TV, radio, social media) to reach broad audiences, and campus ambassadors as peer educators within universities for localized impact. A combination of both was considered most effective. However, participants emphasized that dissemination must remain targeted at critical stakeholders through workshops, webinars, and institution-level engagements rather than relying heavily on mass media.



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