



# Peripheral scholarship and the context of foreign paid publishing in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Lately, a phenomenal dimension of peripheral scholarship, compulsorily demanding the 'foreign', has evolved into the practice of paid publishing in 'foreign' journals among Nigerian academics. These 'foreign' journals afford speedy publishing at a fee with little or no peer review. This study is a descriptive research which collected qualitative data through 30 in-depth interviews conducted with academics in two federal universities in Nigeria. The findings established that though some universities are beginning to question their intellectual validity and propriety, predatory paid-for foreign journals remain popular among academics desirous to satisfy the 'international publishing rule' for promotion at all costs. Lacking international scholarly credibility, predatory journals will not advance Nigerian scholarship into the global scholarly mainstream which the 'international rule' ultimately seeks.

## Keywords

Global South, Global North, international publishing, Nigerian scholarship, paid publishing, peripheral publishing

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## Introduction and background

Scholarship as a global structure is aimed at the theoretical and empirical epistemological explanation of social and physical issues for the advancement of the human race and development. As a body of knowledge, irrespective of the diverse ends of scholarly episteme, whether abstract or practical, classical or modern, liberal or critical, scholarship represents a collection of human intellectual erudition about the immediate environment and components of the human social and physical structures (Collins, 2012; Jubber, 2007). Scholarship thus has a web-like structure that connects the diverse segments of the global intellectual system even in spite of different and antithetical ideological and intellectual traditions and convictions. An often neglected reality of global scholarship is its structuring along the dominant and peripheral lines (Alatas, 2008; Dubey, 2010). The dominant centres of scholarly episteme are the developed countries of the Northern hemisphere while the bulk of the countries in the Global South fall into peripheral realms (Beigel, 2009; Dubey, 2010; Omobowale, 2010; Omobowale et al., 2013). The scholars and academies located in the Global North provide the intellectual, theoretical and methodological standards while the Global South provides data to further validate the epistemologies derived from the North (Alatas, 2003, 2008; Keim, 2011).

A major means through which scholarship is advanced is via the scholarly publishing of findings. An unpublished scholarly finding is as good as not embarking on the research endeavour in the first place. Of all the diverse scholarly dissemination outlets that are available to the intellectual community, including books, journals, encyclopaedias, edited volumes, conference and workshop presentations, the scholarly community views peer review journals as the most valuable (Albrecht et al., 2010; Klingner et al., 2005; Lusk and Hudson, 2009; Vanderstraeten, 2010). The premium placed on journal publishing in the global academy somewhat 'certifies' the intellectual capability and worth of an individual scholar and the scholar's institutional affiliation by extension. In the majority of the academic institutions in the Global North (especially in the English hubs of Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom), this is further measured by impact factor and scholarly indexing as objective measures of scholarly standards and quality (Baum, 2010; Brumback, 2012; Neff and Olden, 2010; Starbuck, 2005).

Impact factor, journal indexing and the dominance of the English language have all been described as factors that disadvantage non-English speaking and non-western academies and journals in the global academy (Bajerski, 2011; Harris, 2001; Tsuda, 1998; Vanderstraeten, 2010, 2011). As nationals of an official English speaking country, Nigerian academics are enabled to present their ideas in the 'dominant language' (that is, English). Still impact factor and journal indexing are not yet major issues considered by academic regulators and appointment and promotion committees in Nigeria<sup>1</sup> (see Ahmadu Bello University, 2012; Obafemi Awolowo University, 2012; Omobowale et al., 2013; University of Ibadan, 2007). The concern of the management of academic institutions and other scholarly regulators in quality control and determination of journal standards is mostly what is officially and socially construed as 'international and/or foreign publishing' (Adomi and Mordi, 2003; Omobowale, 2010; Omobowale et al., 2013). International publishing in this context entails publishing in journals located outside Nigerian borders, and preferably in journals domiciled in western countries

(Omobowale, 2010; Omobowale et al., 2013). The context of ‘international publishing’ in Nigeria is a dimension of peripheral scholarship which seeks to ‘confirm’ the intellectual worth of scholars through publication in journals domiciled in developed countries. The social reality of ‘international publishing’ seemingly ‘justifies’ scholars opting for paid journals as ‘soft’ channels of international dissemination (Omobowale, 2010; Omobowale et al., 2013).

The primary focus of this article is the context of foreign paid publishing in Nigeria as a dimension of peripheral scholarship and academic dependency. The article is based on a blend of both primary and secondary data and it is divided into seven sections starting with this introductory section. The second section presents the theory of academic dependence as the theoretical guide underpinning this study. This is followed by the methodology section. The spread and popularity of paid-for foreign journals is discussed in the next section and this is followed by an examination of the disposition of universities’ promotion committees to foreign paid-for journals. The article also discusses the implications of publishing in foreign pay-to-publish journals for scholarly development and finally concludes.

## The theory of academic dependency

The study is guided by Alatas’s theory of academic dependency (Alatas, 2003, 2008). Alatas identified Great Britain, France and the USA as the principal dominant countries with neo-imperialistic capabilities in social science epistemology and methodology. The ideas generated in these countries have influenced and continue to influence intellectual flow and discourse in peripheral countries. Alatas (2003: 602) states:

... it can be said that in the postcolonial period what we have is academic neo-imperialism or academic neo-colonialism as the West’s monopolistic control of and influence over the nature and flows of social scientific knowledge remain intact even though political independence has been achieved.

By the West I am referring specifically to what we may call the contemporary social science powers, which are the United States, Great Britain and France. These are defined as countries which (1) generate large outputs of social science research in the form of scientific papers in peer-reviewed journal, books, and working and research papers; (2) have a global reach of the ideas and information contained in these works; (3) have the ability to influence the social sciences of countries due to the consumption of the works originating in the powers; and (4) command a great deal of recognition, respect and prestige both at home and abroad.

Alatas further rightly notes that unlike in the colonial period when western nations had total coercive control over every aspect of their colonies, postcolonial academic dependency is sustained not by force, but by the nature of former colonies’ intellectual exchange and dependence on developed academies. The academies and intellectuals in former colonies are dependent on the developed nations in every aspect of scholarly development including the epistemologies, methodology, research, funding and dissemination of findings. Specifically, Alatas revealed six dimensions of academic dependency including dependence on ideas, media of ideas, technology of education, aid for research

and teaching and transfer of Third World skills abroad (brain drain) (see Alatas, 2003: 604–605). Although a search through the literature does not readily provide critical deconstructions of Alatas's ideas, his contributions are similar to the arguments of the indigenizing and/or global sociology theses (Adesina, 2002; Akiwowo, 1986; Patel, 2006, 2010; Quah, 1993), which have been critically rejected by Sztompka (2011) and Archer (1991) in favour of universalism. However, Alatas's ideas have received support from Keim (2011), Hanari (2011), Maia (2011) and Thompson (2006) as a true reflection of the structuring of the global academy, thus emphasizing the need for some equilibrium in global scholarly structuring.

'Dependence on the media of ideas' (Alatas, 2003: 604) particularly explains the focus of this research. The media of ideas such as journals, books and encyclopaedias among other dissemination outlets are critical to scholarly development. The structure of academic dependency at present ensures that the scholarly regulatory indices (e.g. impact factor and journal indexing) are dominated and controlled by western scholars. Hence, the majority of the journals with impact factor and that are indexed are western journals, while most of the journals in peripheral countries are somewhat 'de-recognized', making them 'sub-standard' and of 'low quality' in the western-dominated global academic system. The impact factor and indexed journals assume the notion of the 'collection of the best' journals with 'international credence' that may to a large extent provide the basis of the measurement of a scholar's and an academy's intellectual worth.

Many universities across the globe have responded to the international demand for scholarly dissemination in journals adjudged as the standard by developing pro-international publishing policies (Aaltojärvi et al., 2008; Antikainen, 2008; Dennis et al., 2006; Hemmings et al., 2007; Jubber, 2007; Vanderstraeten, 2010, 2011). In many developing countries, and in Nigeria in particular, international publishing may not necessarily mean publishing in impact factor and/or indexed journals, but publishing in journals located outside the borders of the countries of the intellectual actor in particular (Omobowale, 2010; Omobowale et al., 2013). Hence, the difficulty in publishing in impact factor and/or indexed journals has resulted in local scholars opting for paid journals that are located in countries outside the scholars' places of domicile (Omobowale, 2010; Omobowale et al., 2013). This practice has of course resulted in a huge collection of so-called open access 'international journals', with poor review records and pedigree (Kilonzo and Magak, 2013; Oyinlola, 2013). Beall (2012) describes such journals as 'predatory', lacking rigorous academic quality, with suspicious/fictitious editorial boards, often demanding huge publishing fees from authors, indiscriminately sending spam calls for papers and review requests to scholars' emails and prefixing these publications with the nomenclatures of the developed countries (for example, *American Journal of ...*, *British Journal of ...*, or the term 'international') without necessarily having anything to do with the countries claimed.

While the intellectual worth of many of the so-called open access pay-to-publish journals may be suspect, it is important to acknowledge the fact that they attract submissions from many scholars desirous to publish at all costs. Among Nigerian scholars, the supposed location of the journals as international 'media of ideas' present them as 'easy' media of publication, providing 'succour' to satisfy the 'international' publication demand for a fee. Hence, they reflect a sort of paid-for academic 'relevance' lacking

intellectual credibility. This experiential phenomenon is rapidly becoming the bedrock of peripheral scholarship in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The next section presents the study methodology.

## Methodology

This study is a descriptive and analytic empirical research. Qualitative data were collected in order to analyse the context of foreign paid publishing among Nigerian scholars (Akanle and Olutayo, 2011; Bryman, 2004; Olutayo and Akanle, 2009). Complementary data collection methods (within a data triangulation technique) were utilized so that the data gathered could be robust, comprehensive and complete to ensure interconnectedness between theory and research. This has been confirmed by Gilbert (2001) who observed that research, theory and method interconnectedness entrench ground breaking research in the scientific and sociological communities (see also Akanle and Olutayo, 2012). This interconnectedness approach has particularly enhanced the data quality, reliability and validity of this research.

We adopted a qualitative method so as to be able to explore in-depth both the spoken and the unspoken trajectories of the problematic, especially as driven by the dynamics of social relations and academic socioeconomics that moderate and motivate peripheral scholarly publishing, and are influenced by the compulsory demand for foreign publication in Nigerian universities. Primarily, data for the study were collected from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. These two universities were purposively selected because they are two of Nigeria's foremost federal universities, representing respectively the nation's southern and northern geographical and political divides with implications for academic and publishing disposition and productivity.<sup>2</sup> In each selected university, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted in 2012 with 15 academics in: social sciences/humanities and science<sup>3</sup> based disciplines.<sup>4</sup> In each university, four key informant interviews (KIIs) were also conducted with senior academics involved in appointments and promotions. In all, therefore, 30 IDIs and eight KIIs were conducted. Data collected were transcribed, sorted and subjected to content analysis and are presented heretofore. The first issue examined in the major findings is the spread and popularity of paid-for foreign journals and this is presented next.

## Spread and popularity of paid-for foreign journals

Paid-for foreign journals<sup>5</sup> are popular in Nigeria due to the demand for voluminous 'off-shore' publication by universities' Appointment and Promotion Committees (A&PCs) and the challenge of high rejection rates of submissions from the Third World by journals in the West (Aydinli and Mathews, 2000; Canagarajah, 1996; Salager-Meyer, 2008; Starbuck, 2005).

Specifically, the spread of patronage has continued to be bolstered due to four primary reasons: first, previous successful utilization by academics of such sub-standard paid-for foreign journals to achieve promotion; second, the desire of 'academics' who are 'weak' in empirical traditions to have rapid promotion; third, sheer ignorance on the part of prospective authors about the status of sub-standard foreign paid journals;

and fourth, the acceptance of these pay-to-publish international journals without adequate scrutiny by the A&PCs. As noted by a middle level academic at the Obafemi Awolowo University: 'if an academic could have promotion on the basis of untested, paid-for foreign journals, then many other scholars will be interested naturally' (Male IDI/Lecturer/Obafemi Awolowo University). Likewise another academic at Ahmadu Bello University states:

Another challenge is that scholars who do not read often are likely to fall victims. [Many] Nigerian scholars do fall victims because they lack the culture of extensive reading. How many times do lecturers refresh their bank of knowledge? [Many] stop engaging in rigorous academic endeavours as soon as they bag PhDs. ... How would they not fall victims of such paid-for, fake foreign journals that routinely request exorbitant fees for unreliable peer review process in the quest to rapidly earn promotions? (Male IDI/Senior Lecturer/Ahmadu Bello University)

Ostensibly, productive utilization of paid-for journals that are largely sub-standard for the purpose of promotion within the university system in Nigeria has continued to enhance the spread and acceptability of such publishing platforms. Of course, many of the upcoming academics are already toeing this line of scholarly publishing since rapid promotion from one academic cadre to the other can be assured with less stress; thereby sacrificing academic excellence. Often, a few academics who have devoted their efforts to publishing outstanding articles in tested peer review journals are bypassed by academics that have opted for paid-for foreign journals in the promotion exercise. Among this class of scholars, paid-for journals are particularly unpopular, though they are aware of their existence. They rather opt for the standard journals, responding to reviewers' comments and patiently enduring the intellectually required standardization process even when it seems slow, keeping one waiting for two to three years or more before the process is completed.

While the patronage of paid-for journal outlets would depend on the interestedness of individual academics, to a considerable extent, the ignorance prevalent on the part of patronizing authors, the quest for quick publication for rapid promotion and the acceptance of such journals by A&PCs have ensured the spread and popularity of sub-standard paid-for foreign journals. It should be noted that not all online and paid-for foreign journals are, indeed, sub-standard or fraudulent (Lusk and Hudson, 2009; Nwagwu and Ahmed, 2009). Quite a number of such journals do have reliable peer review mechanisms although they are paid-for. But, the majority of scholars who patronize sub-standard paid-for journals either do so ignorantly or find it difficult to withstand the rigours of the standard peer review process. In this respect, credible peer review journals have not been popular with scholars who would prefer to have their works published urgently. They have often found quick gratification in the fraudulent 'cash and carry' journals. One interviewee tried to distinguish between predatory pay-to-publish journals and the standard ones thus:

... there should be a clear distinction among these journals. Although some reputable paid-for foreign journals accept payments before a work is published, the work will still undergo critical peer reviews before it could be published. On the other hand, there are other sources that will accept payment and your work will never undergo any peer review process. Those ones are

sub-standard journal sources and they are the ones that are most common now in Nigeria and they are mostly online based. (Male IDI/Senior Lecturer/Ahmadu Bello University)

The internet is a real impetus for the popularity of such journals. For instance, if links to such journals are provided through popular online search engines such as Google, the impression among the prospective authors is usually that they are 'reliable'. The invincibility of the internet actors, however, has enabled the growth and popularity of unreliable paid-for foreign journals (Adeniran, 2011). At the very least, they are utilized in achieving the immediate need of academic promotion, even though they may lack intellectual credibility and, of course, may not be cited by serious intellectuals and dissemination outlets. Hence, the non-credible online pay-to-publish journals are derogatorily described as *yahoo-yahoo* journals by more serious academics. *Yahoo-yahoo* is a local euphemism that is used to describe internet fraud.

The subsisting 'foreign publishing' requirements of universities' A&PCs is an offshoot of colonial domination (Alatas, 2003) and it of course advances 'epistemological imperialism' within the contemporary global knowledge production framework (Omobowale et al., 2013). This is because publications in foreign-based journals are accorded more recognition than publications in Nigeria (or in any other) journal outlets in the Third World irrespective of the standards entailed. The usefulness and popular acceptability of sub-standard journals with so-called 'international nomenclature' have continued to grow among Nigerian 'academics'. By adopting 'western' and/or 'international' nomenclature or by creating an impression that they are 'foreign', paid-for journals present the notion of the 'international media of ideas' (Alatas, 2003) through which scholarly submissions can be disseminated for 'promotion' and 'scholarly acceptance'. This shows the experiential and contextual power of the value attached to the 'international' norm, which is of course a consequence of academic dependency in Nigeria. This dependence is not only in terms of publishing in standard 'media of ideas', but also publishing in the 'media' virtually accredited through mere adoption of unsubstantiated 'international' nuances and claims.

Compulsory publication by Global North scholars in Global South journals is not a necessity. This prompts one to question the need for scholars in the 'Global South' to have their research outputs imprinted as foreign-published, especially when scholars opt for sub-standard paid-for foreign journals that are inferior to so-called local journals. The immediate answer from senior academics is that prior to the international publication rule, academics established sub-standard local journals and published their poor quality papers and those of their friends and collaborators without standard peer review. Ironically, the pre-professorial cadre of scholars often accuse the senior professors as having taken advantage of publication in sub-standard local journals to earn promotion into the professorial grades prior to the 'international' publication rule. The assumption among many scholars who are in the pre-professorial cadre is that the professors who have effected a change in the promotion guidelines have done so to prevent the junior ones from being promoted so that their domination of scholars in the non-professorial cadre may last a very long time and to ensure submission and patronage on the part of their junior colleagues. By and large, it is important to note that whereas many academics indeed earned promotion by self-publishing or publishing through

collaborative colleague connections and networks in local journals, a good number of the senior professors actually followed standards by publishing in frontline journals. The ‘international’ rule is essentially and primarily aimed at discouraging sub-standard self- and connection/network-based publishing in favour of standard peer review and good quality scholarly dissemination in journals whose credibility can advance the intellectual worth and ranking of academics and academies alike. Nevertheless, self- and connection/network-based poor quality publication has been replaced with paid-for publication in poor and predatory ‘international’ journals of doubtful credibility.

Although the spread and popularity of paid-for foreign online journals cut across various gender and positional categories in the Nigerian university system, individuals that fall within the pre-professorial range are most likely to ‘patronize’ these fraudulent journals. A senior academic confirmed this assertion thus: ‘other categories of academics aside from those on the professorial cadres are usually curious to publish their research in “foreign-based” journals because of the demand of the promotion exercise. Hence, they do patronize various paid-for publishing outlets, more so that the entire promotional process reflects “a game of number”’ (Male KII/Social Sciences – Humanities/Professor/Obafemi Awolowo University). Full professors are not subjected to the pressures to publish as much as those below the full professorial grade, still seeking promotion. In fact, it is often assumed, and this may be factual, that many professors hardly conduct further rigorous academic research aside from consultancies and other financially rewarding sponsored research endeavours after attaining the position of professor. This may be partly due to the huge administrative and assessment duties professors have to undertake, and the fact that the system (that is, the university administration’s A&PCs) does not really demand further publications from full professors as much as it demands from pre-professorial cadres (for example, Ahmadu Bello University [2012], Obafemi Awolowo University [2012] and University of Ibadan [2007] do not prescribe publishing-for-career advancement and retention for full professors). Many academics in the pre-professorial categories are eager for promotion. Hence, through paid-for foreign journals, a potentially difficult career situation is possibly remedied through questionable ‘international publications’ of ‘feigned quality’. It is therefore important to capture the promotion nuances particularly in relation to the disposition of universities’ promotion committees. To this we now turn.

## **The disposition of promotion committees**

The essence of every scholar is contribution to knowledge through innovative research findings and dissemination. The channel of research dissemination is, however, important. This is because the reach and availability of scholarly work to international audiences is germane for scholarly and scientific development especially when the channel is located in the North – often considered as the epicentre of knowledge and scholarship. When findings are only shared locally, they are often considered sub-standard with minimum academic weight. Local publications are also often suspected to be fraught with manipulation and are subjected to little or no peer review. Even when peer reviewed, they are often considered stage-managed and reviewed by friends and other known colleagues. Generally, in Nigeria, articles published in local journals are considered



somewhat sub-standard and those published in international journals as being of high quality due to supposed painstaking peer review systems and higher visibility for the scholar, the article and the institution.

The proportion of publications that must be ‘international’ is dependent on the position of an academic. For professorial cadres, the proportion of articles in international journals could be expected to be as much as 70% of total publication. The crave for the ‘international’ is such that young and/or new academics with international publications are ‘celebrated’ as ‘dogged scholars’ – sometimes dubbed ‘professors’. Nigerian scholars are largely constrained to publish based on the promotion requirements of their schools and it is against this background that we explored the disposition of universities’ promotion committees to paid-for foreign journals in order to contextualize emerging peripheral scholarship within the domains of foreign paid publishing.

The data revealed that though international journals are respected as hallmarks of cutting edge scholarship, not all international journals prefixed *International*, *European*, *American*, *Asian* and so on are respected and accepted for promotion. Promotion committees are now becoming conscious of the manipulation that goes into the so-called ‘international journals’, as unwholesome markets develop among the corridors of academic publishing to exploit scholars, particularly from Africa and Nigeria especially. Innovative sharp practices are perpetrated through these *foreign journals* with the ‘editors’ and publishers taking advantage of both unsuspecting and suspecting, yet willing, academic clients desperate for *international publications* in order to attain promotion. This problematic situation is fast becoming an endemic detrimental challenge to the Nigerian scholarly community. An interviewee contextually captures the issues thus:

Any social problem in the world whether socioeconomic, political or otherwise, when you are trying to apply it to Nigeria, it becomes a big problem. We have academic corruption, religious corruption, political corruption, all sorts of corruption. Here we are talking about academic corruption. Let us now apply this background to the issue of articles/journal publications. In Nigerian universities, promotion is based on your ability to publish and the quality of your publications. Apart from your qualifications, you are expected to be publishing articles. Now, journals these days are heavily manipulated. Given the internet, there are many journals but most of them are very dubious. I had one experience when I was doing my PhD in Rhodes University, South Africa. The university pays for your publications and other things relating to your academic programme. I wrote an article and sent [it] to an online journal. When it came to the point of payment for this article, the [actual] address of the bank that I want to pay into turned out that the address was somewhere in Sapele, Nigeria whereas the address that was given to us was City Bank in Netherlands. One funny thing is that these journals have good graphics and eye-catching names but they are highly sub-standard in terms of content and quality. (Male IDI/Social Sciences – Humanities/Ahmadu Bello University)

A critical point here is whether promotion committees are positively or negatively disposed to these paid-for foreign journals. The attitude of promotion committees is important since the demand for paid-for foreign journals is mainly for the purposes of promotion without rigorous and competitive scholarship. Sub-standard paid-for foreign journals will be unpopular provided promotion committees reject them. Unfortunately, findings were mixed and chequered. While although the most common responses were

that promotion committees are becoming aware of these journals and are sometimes rejecting publication in them as part of the criteria for promotion,<sup>6</sup> there are data that indicate acceptance, but depending on personal sentiments towards or against the academic seeking promotion. There is thus the problem of inconsistency. While publication in such journals may be rejected for Dr A, they could be accepted for Dr N depending on school politics and other basic sentiments. This is largely a case of double standards and portends danger for the future of academic publishing in Nigeria. One interviewee stated:

I do not want to talk about [the] promotion committee because my experience with them is a bad one. You can imagine a professor who got to his position based on conference papers, assessing lecturers who want promotion based on journals. Is that person actually qualified? Promotion sometimes is attached with sentiments, politics, jealousy and hatred. [On whether the promotion committees in the university encourage lecturers to publish in foreign journals], yes, they do. If you know that you have a first class or a 2-1, you should go to the international arena to compete. If you cannot, that makes you a local champion. You do not need to be told as an academic to publish in foreign journals before you do so. It is necessary for you. [But] there is no rejection [of an *international* journal] based on quality. Promotion is heavily manipulated. It is tied to sentiments and politics. (Male IDI/Social Sciences –Humanities/Senior Lecturer/Ahmadu Bello University)

This view was also shared by some respondents in the other university studied:

Yes, promotion committees are comfortable with it [foreign paid sub-standard journals], but they are not aware of it being paid-for. [Acceptance for promotion] is based on the sentiment as follow up to it. No rigidity on publishing. The committee needs to review the journal that can qualify one for promotion. (Female IDI/Sciences/Senior Lecturer/Obafemi Awolowo University)

Another captured an important component of the problem:

They [promotion committees] complain about them. Lecturers are not encouraged. Unpaid journals are so limited [compared to] paid journals. There is nothing bad about the paid journals. The unpaid ones are above our standard. Over time people will always look out for another alternative. (Male IDI/Sciences/Lecturer/Obafemi Awolowo University)

It could be seen that while promotion committees are becoming conscious that many paid-for foreign journals are predatory and are rejecting them, many remain unaware. These predatory journals are survival strategies for those who have difficulty publishing in the frontline international journals. This clearly demonstrates a capacity gap among many academics, that some are unable to satisfy the prestigious specifications of real international scholarship. This leads to the precarious situation of a challenged peripheral scholarship seeking survival at all costs. Many thus take advantage of the digitalization of academic knowledge (positively and negatively) to share their ideas and meet promotion requirements, even if such avenues are globally treated as sub-standard (see also Aina and Mutula, 2007; Chnadravanshi, 2007; Mlambo, 2007; Olukoju, 2002).

While personal preference and conspiracy views were acknowledged and voiced, as shown above, promotion committees are taking some objectively decisive actions to stop the proliferation of these predatory paid-for journals through rejection as promotion criteria. These actions may however be misconstrued and may not be objectively applied across the board. Also, the process and application may be too slow in real terms. Another major problem however is that there is no standardized promotion framework and guidelines across the universities nationwide. In some universities even, there are no standardized promotion guidelines across departments and faculties. Promotion committees consider their own promotion and publication peculiarities and promote their members according to different criteria from what pertains in other climes. Some units that perceive their disciplines as more difficult in terms of getting published internationally devise means of promoting *their people* (by claiming their specializations are ‘technical’, or ‘special’) even if what is available are predatory paid-for journals, whereas some other faculties and departments have more stringent anti-sub-standard journals guidelines. While some departments and faculties have and review their approved journal lists, others do not have any, while still others have controversial journals approved on their lists. The situation is thus dangerously left at the discretion of the individual academic units and universities to invent promotion rules relative to journals, and this is often subject to abuse.

The situation was vividly captured thus by a respondent who is also a member of the university promotion committee:

I became a professor in 2001. I could have become a professor since 1993 but because of this issue of fake journals, which we are talking about. In all Nigerian universities, the criteria for promotion are not the same. The NUC [National Universities Commission in charge of regulation of university education in Nigeria] has no standardized criteria for promotion. Even within the same universities, the requirement(s) for promotion in departments, faculties differ(s). In the central promotion committee, it depends on whether the chairman can defend the promotion or not. Therefore, there are lots of anomalies, right from when I joined the university as a lecturer. For instance, in [the] Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, five persons will publish a paper and each lecturer will earn a point for the journal. Some colleagues became professors through that. However, in [the] Faculty of Social Science, the point for a journal will be distributed among the writers. (Male KII/Social Sciences – Humanities/Professor/Ahmadu Bello University)

Another lecturer from a different university captured the situation thus:

There is a set standard for promotion and appointment by the university. They are not necessarily complaining about it. The regulation is there to ensure that laid down rules are followed. You must submit your journal for accreditation so that the committee will look into it according to the standard set by the university. It is good not to totally rely on the ones that are not credible. Lecturers should publish with the credible ones out of them. For senior lecturers you must have 20% of your journal publications foreign and 80% local. Readers should have 40% local and 60% foreign while those applying for promotion to full professorship must have 80% foreign and 20% local. Foreign is foreign when it is published in the reputable journals and the standard of the paper is seriously considered. The promotion committee is not after whether you paid or not for journals but they are after [the] credibility of it. (Male IDI/Social Sciences – Humanities/Senior Lecturer/Obafemi Awolowo University)

Yet another interviewee states:

In this university, in my own faculty, the promotion committee is seriously against these journals. They are not acceptable for promotion. There are cases in the last promotion exercise when these journals were rejected for promotion. They make lecturers to be lazy especially in schools where they are acceptable for promotion. In situations where lecturers are promoted based on these journals, you will find out that they cannot engage in scholarly debates. They will not be able to compete locally and internationally. (Male IDI/Sciences/Senior Lecturer/Ahmadu Bello University)

It could be noted from the foregoing that the attitudes of promotion committees to the foreign paid-for peripheral journals are largely subjective and non-uniform across universities and even within universities. Different universities and intra-university academic units determine what to do about these journals and promotion in an ad hoc way depending on who is in charge and the interest of who is at stake. Although it is correct to maintain that some measure of awareness is currently brewing against the pay-to-publish journals, this is not yet widespread, and decisions may be somewhat manipulated for more personal reasons and favouritism. Thus these journals become a variable ingredient in the politicization of the promotion exercise. This is what we call the *political objectification* of paid-for foreign journals in Nigeria's peripheral scholarship. Here political objectification refers to the differential acceptance of so-called sub-standard journals for the promotion of preferred candidates while those not favoured would have the rules applied to them strictly.

Nevertheless, the insistence of universities on foreign publishing is contingent upon the view that local academics must go global since scholarship is global. That is, scholars should strive to publish in the West particularly to get their scholarship and institutions *certified* and *exposed*. If an academic has published locally and/or in a Southern journal, it is of very little importance. And the scholar will be lucky if the publication is accepted for promotion. On the contrary, if the article appears in a Northern/western journal, it draws the required attention. Even when the journal is peer reviewed but Southern, *it is still of little consequence*. This fact echoes academic dependence, demonstrating the certifying capabilities of Northern scholarship on which the Southern scholarship must depend as the media of ideas. Against this backdrop, the trajectories of the problematic may have implications for scholarly development. What then could these implications be?

## Foreign pay-to-publish journals and scholarly development

A great number of the foreign pay-to-publish journals are presented as open access journals. Unlike closed journals, open access journals allow free online access to published articles. According to several authors (Kelty et al., 2008; Longo and Magnolo, 2009; Walters and Wilder, 2007) these journals are revolutionizing access to intellectual resources making them available to scholars who otherwise would have found them inaccessible, while also reducing libraries' and universities' costs on journal subscription. Many open access journals may be credible, but a whole lot lack credibility with poor peer review policy and relying only on author fees for publication and profit making

(Beall, 2012). This category of popular paid-for journals portends grave consequences for scholarly development.

An interviewee at the Ahmadu Bello University describes sub-standard paid-for journals as fakes. He states:

You can get published and get the promotion that you so desire, but then you will find out that you cannot be respected wherever or whenever your name is mentioned. When a reputable organization wants to take you on as a consultant, all that it needs is to access your name via internet. Just a single error can ruin your career; it can damage your reputation. ... But because of the desperation and the short time frame you need to get your work published ... some academics resort to publishing in these fake journals especially fake foreign journals. ... The problem here is that here in ABU, there is no standard rule guiding promotion. It varies among departments and faculties. While some people get away with publishing in these fake foreign journals, some do not. This is why some people still take chances to see if they will be promoted. These journals have adverse effects on scholarly development. If fake journals [did] not exist, academics [would] have no other choice but to publish quality articles in credible reputable journals. The existence of these journals and the possibility of their acceptability for promotion mean that colleagues will take their chances. They will not go for quality publication. ... The implication of these journals is also on our students, especially the postgraduate students. Some of them refer to articles in these journals. It is difficult to control or restrict citing articles in these journals because of the impression that they are foreign journals. Therefore people assume that they are of high quality. ... Instead of building and creating knowledge, these journals are destroying knowledge. (Male IDI/Senior Lecturer/Ahmadu Bello University)

Confirming the assertion above, an interviewee at the Obafemi Awolowo University opines:

It is just a form of economic flight. ... It is difficult for me to grade these journals. Some of them are reputable and some are not. You cannot categorically say journals that charge money are not reputable. A few ones that I have seen are very reputable. For those that are not reputable, their capacity to enhance scholarship development is zero, but ... those that are reputable will surely enhance scholarship development. However, so many of these pay-to-publish journals are not properly reviewed and are not reputable. I believe these ones will surely have [a] negative effect on cutting edge research. They also adversely affect local journals. You may send a manuscript to a local journal and for several months you may have no feedback, but with paid-for foreign journals, you might get your work published within two to three weeks after submission. This is not enhancing intellectual development at all. (Male IDI/Social Sciences – Humanities/Lecturer/Obafemi Awolowo University)

As stated earlier, not all paid-for journals are sub-standard. The reputable ones could enhance scholarly development. The sub-standard paid-for journals, on the other hand, pose grave, debilitating consequences for scholarship. Since predatory open access journals are largely interested in profit making and not empirical and scholarly standards, they tend to mass-publish poorly written and edited articles, representing poor scholarship. Poor quality but acceptable for promotion more often than not, the local academic is encouraged to continue patronizing paid-for foreign journals to satisfy promotion requirements at all costs.

Over time, as these sub-standard, predatory journals continually publish articles submitted by local scholars, the scholarly and epistemic capabilities of the authors and by extension the local scholarly regimes are systemically de-intellectualized. Published indeed, but the articles have little or no worth to the global intellectual community. Lacking intellectual credibility, articles in these journals would not be cited in credible scholarly sources and dissemination outlets. Hence, even though they are published, they remain worthless as electronic or paper pieces and unappreciated works of dubious scholarship.

Of course, the global view of such articles in predatory journals will inform the scholarly perception of their authors. Hence, as long as Third World scholars in general and Nigerian scholars in particular publish articles in predatory journals with 'crafty and suspicious' 'international' nomenclatures and addresses, the local scholarship itself will be disdained as sub-standard and weak in the global academy. Furthermore, local scholarly development will be weak as the local intellectual skills in standard and qualitative production of empirical epistemic findings will be weakened. Consequently, scholarly Nigerian academics will peripherally publish articles that lack international intellectual acceptability even though such articles have been published in journals deceptively prefixed *international*.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing, constrained to prove their scholarship through the foreign 'media of ideas', which the local university appointment and promotion bodies have adopted as the 'standard' – a clear demonstration of academic dependence – many local scholars have opted to resort to sub-standard paid-for foreign journals. These journals more often than not publish 'as is' without the standard peer review process and quality control. Most often, articles in such journals are not even edited at all and typographical errors can be noticed from the first sentence in the introduction and throughout the article. Sometimes, authors' names are also mis-spelt as these journals hurry to publish online to fulfil their promise of rapid publishing and attract more *desperate customers* who are mostly located in Asia and Africa. In Nigeria, it is common to see some 'foreign' predatory journals having an issue with 95% or nine out of 10 articles from Nigerian contributors. Such journals now even target Nigerians. Hence, foreign paid-for publishing is a dimension of peripheral scholarship that has evolved in response to the quest to standardize scholarly publication by discouraging sub-standard publishing locally. When local publishing predominated, the usual practice was to self-publish and/or to publish through connections and networks without necessarily ensuring peer review standards.

Of course, many local journals ensured standards, but the practices of the poor quality local journals eclipsed whatever quality the better local journals might have ensured when the 'international' rule was introduced. Now that universities' A&PCs have introduced and enforced the international publication rule, foreign but predatory paid-for foreign journals are increasingly having popular appeal among scholars in quest of quick publication to achieve promotion. Indeed, the manuscripts are published, and promotion may be secured; but in the final analysis, the local scholarship that continually publishes in sub-standard predatory journals loses scholarly relevance and wanes into the

intellectual doldrums incapable of scholarly contribution into the mainstream. Thus the local scholarship remains peripheral still, as the popular ‘international’ media of ideas (in this case, the sub-standard paid-for foreign journals) lack the credibility to advance local scholarship into the global scholarly mainstream.

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### Notes

1. The impact factor is gradually being emphasized in the University of Ibadan. There are speculations it might soon be included in the appointment and promotion regulations.
2. Nigeria’s premier university, the University of Ibadan (UI), was excluded because related studies had earlier been conducted at the university (see Omobowale, 2010; Omobowale et al., 2013; Oyinlola, 2013).
3. Foreign paid-for publishing is common among scholars irrespective of disciplinary inclinations. Social science based disciplines include sociology, economics, geography, demography, psychology and political science. The humanities disciplines are English, literature, religious studies, linguistics and languages, classics and law. Science disciplines are those which have the natural sciences as their core foundation, such as chemistry, physics, medicine, engineering and agriculture among many others.
4. Most of the interviewees admitted they had published in paid-for foreign journals at one point or the other.
5. Interviewees generally admitted that paid-for foreign journals charge exorbitant fees ranging from US\$100–500.
6. The University of Ibadan Central Appointment and Promotion Committee has blacklisted a few pay-to-publish international journals.

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## Résumé

La récente et forte attraction qu'exercent les publications internationales sur la recherche périphérique a transformé la pratique de la publication payante chez les chercheurs nigériens. Ces revues « internationales » payantes permettent de publier rapidement des articles avec aucune ou peu d'évaluation scientifique par des pairs. Cet article s'appuie sur une étude descriptive des données qualitatives recueillies lors de 30 entretiens menés auprès de chercheurs de deux universités fédérales au Nigéria. Les résultats de ce travail montre que bien que certaines universités commencent à contester la validité intellectuelle et le caractère prédateur de ces revues étrangères payantes, celles-ci restent populaires parmi les chercheurs désireux de satisfaire à la règle de la publication étrangère afin de promouvoir leur carrière à tout prix. Par manque de crédibilité scientifique internationale, ces revues prédatrices ne favorisent pas les avancées de la recherche nigérienne sur la scène internationale, objectif recherché par la règle de la publication internationale.

## Mots-clés

Publication périphérique, recherche nigérienne, Nord mondialisé, Sud mondialisé, publication payante, publication internationale

## Resumen

Recientemente, una dimensión fenomenal de academia periférica obligatoriamente exigiendo lo "internacional", ha desarrollado, entre los académicos nigerianos, la práctica de la publicación pagada en revistas "extranjeras". Estas revistas "extranjeras" ofrecen una rápida publicación por una tarifa, con poca o ninguna revisión por pares. Este estudio es una investigación descriptiva, que recoge los datos cualitativos a través de 30 entrevistas en profundidad realizadas a académicos de dos universidades federales en Nigeria. Los resultados establecieron que aunque algunas universidades están comenzando a cuestionar su validez y su corrección intelectual, revistas extranjeras predatoras pagadas siguen siendo populares entre los académicos deseosos de satisfacer la "regla de publicación internacional" para la promoción a toda costa. Al carecer de credibilidad académica internacional, estas revistas predatoras no guiarían a los académicos nigerianos en la corriente académica global, que la "norma internacional" finalmente procura.

## Palabras clave

Publicación periférica, Academia en Nigeria, norte global, sur global, publicación pagada, publicación internacional