

2025

**Federal University of
Technology, Minna,
Nigeria**



Nigerian Journal of Technological Research

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NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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Background Brief: The Nigerian Journal of Technological Research (NJTR) is the official journal of the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria. It was first published in June 1989. It has since made significant strides in its efforts to provide an avenue for the dissemination of relevant, up-to-date research information in the core areas of discipline available at the University at inception; namely, Pure and Applied Sciences, Engineering Technology, Environmental Technology and Agricultural Technology.

Philosophy: As a strictly scientific and technological journal, it tends to provide information on problem-solving technology to its immediate environment and the international community.

Development: The Journal's responsiveness to the dynamic nature of research and development at the Federal University of Technology, Minna, and its environs has widened its scope of information dissemination to include, but is not limited to, Agricultural Technology, Environmental Technology, Engineering, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Educational Technology, and Innovation Technology. It has developed electronic communication procedures to ensure it can reach a larger community more quickly. It is anticipated that the Journal will contain scientific data providing up-to-date information for problem-solving in the identified areas of the University program.

Management: The Nigerian Journal of Technological Research has a unique management structure which enables it to carry out its functions promptly. This includes the Management Board, Editorial Board, Editorial Advisory Board, Regional Editors, Associate Editors, and a Business Manager. These groups bring their vast knowledge to the journal, ensuring its quality and reputation for academic output.

Finally, the Management Board and the Editorial Board of the Nigerian Journal of Technological Research firmly believe in the quality of information that will benefit mankind, and they are committed to ensuring the productivity and quality of information dissemination.

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

This edition of the Nigerian Journal of Technological Research is the first for the year 2025, which was a remarkable year for the Editorial Board. The large number of submissions and the quality of the manuscripts are a huge encouragement to us. The Board organised a retreat for academic and administrative staff including our reviewers and thesis supervisors on the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence in academic writing. The knowledge gained through the workshop was brought to bear on the selection of articles published in this edition.

This issue brings together thirteen papers addressing critical advancements in technology, environmental management, and institutional practices. On the computational front, the research explores network security and operational efficiency through improved whale optimisation and particle swarm optimisation algorithms designed for IoT threat detection and wireless sensor network management. These analytical approaches extend directly to public health and urban planning, featuring feature selection techniques for early diabetes detection and predictive emission modeling for volatile organic compounds (VOCS) in tropical built environments. The volume also examines sector-specific operational shifts, including the adoption of automated valuation models in real estate, digital preservation practices in university libraries, and the impact of physical destination environments on tourism experiences. More importantly, several studies confront broader structural and sustainability challenges, discussing renewable energy infrastructure for electric vehicles, nanobiotechnology for environmental decontamination, employee engagement in corporate social responsibility, geographical bias in Afrocentric architectural research, and the potential of Diamond Open Access to de-commodify academic publishing.

As usual, the Editorial Board is ever grateful to the University Management for the immense support and encouragement provided to them. Also, the Board is appreciative of the support of TETFUND. The financial assistance received consistently from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) has enabled the Journal to adopt the Diamond Open Access Policy. Authors no longer pay the Article Processing Fee. We hope to sustain this policy as long as we continue to receive funding from TETFUND.

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DE-COMMODIFYING ACADEMIC PUBLISHING: CAN DIAMOND OPEN ACCESS BELL THE CAT? MUSINGS FROM NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Academic publishing in Nigeria, and more broadly across Africa, is gradually being influenced by commercially driven systems based in the Global North. The commodification of knowledge, evident through paywalls and high article processing charges (APCs) has created significant barriers to equitable access, visibility, and meaningful participation for researchers and institutions in developing countries. This short communication paper reflects on how the same payment of APCs is a financial sustainability model for journals in Nigeria and the attendant consequences of this model. This paper examines the potential of Diamond Open Access (DOA) model, where neither authors nor readers pay fees as a transformative pathway to de-commodify scholarly publishing. It also offers insights for policymakers, funders, librarians, and scholarly communities working towards a more inclusive and community-governed scholarly communication ecosystem.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The open access (OA) movement has contributed significantly to social justice principles by democratising access to digital information and knowledge in Africa. Consequently, the OA community is keen on seeing Africans and Nigerians contribute to the open knowledge ecosystem through knowledge generation, which is perceived as a prerogative of the global north. This would close the existing hierarchy and perception, that the developing world is mostly an area to be studied and not a place from which to speak or write (Sengupta, 2020). - And who says Nigerians don't write?

As at 2023, Nigeria had approximately 987 research journals; the highest from all African countries with 23 indexed on the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and 311 on African Journals Online (AJOL) respectively (Olyhoek, 2023). Majority of these journals are run by professional societies, institutions and their departments. One may ask: what is the underlying access model for these publications, that non-visibility of published articles became a moniker for African journals?

While the academic publishing community transitioned to the different open access models (Wise, et. al. 2024) from the traditional subscription model, many journals in Nigeria continued to function solely in print format. Some journals that have transitioned online, and adopted the Gold open access model, motivated by researchers' demand for increased visibility and accessibility to research findings. A few surprisingly retained the traditional subscription-based model. The Gold Open Access model which is criticised in the global north for being driven by commercial interests exists in Nigeria, but this time, it is driven by the need for sustainability to meet with the increased demand for outlets to publish—An unintended consequence of a promotion and tenure assessment system that rewards quantity over quality of research outputs. The 2024 Electronic Information for Libraries (EiFL) landscape report of no-fee publishing in Africa collected data from 199 journals from Africa that identified as Diamond Open Access; not surprising that only 14 were from Nigeria.

The principle behind the Diamond Open Access (DOA) movement is that research is freely available to everyone, without publishing or subscription fees to either the author or the reader. Its adoption in Africa signals a potential shift away from a profit-driven or ‘*sustainability-driven*’ publishing culture via financial barriers removal, towards a more equitable one; the concern is how?

Most OA journals in Nigeria rely solely on assessment fees and Article Publishing Charges (APCs) if authors' manuscripts are accepted, to cover operational costs. These costs include payment for reviewers, editorial board, website development and hosting, graphic design, copy editing (Murray, 2014) and, printing hard copies. In some rare cases, pay-per-view article access and sales from print copies are alternative funding sources. While it can be argued that these journals are modest in their fee structure, compared to the big commercial publishers; these charges are sometimes beyond reach for some researchers or an opportunity cost for others, especially postgraduate students and early career researchers. The country is home to many researchers who struggle with financial constraints, so a practice like ‘*add my name syndrome*’ is a common parody for research collaboration (Afebuameh, 2021). Most times, in reality, it is just a guise for shared cost. This perpetuates the commodification of academic publishing and enables unethical publishing behaviour which complicates the integrity of journals from Nigeria.

Conversely, within the academic publishing community, APCs are seen as a necessary means to remain operational at the very least, and ensure that publishing platforms remain functional. Without stable funding, many journals risk significant operational strain or collapse (Adetomiwa & Abduldayan 2024). While we are reflecting on this narrative, there

is also the deeper concern regarding the unintended consequence of non-payment of APCs; the financial dependence on host institutions, that may introduce financial and ethical vulnerability for the journals (Smith & Veldsman, 2024).

Another uncomfortable reality within the academic publishing ecosystem in Nigeria is that the knowledge economy is more prevalent than the knowledge democracy, which corresponds better to the values of *Ubuntu* in African societies. Academic labour involved in the publishing workflow is viewed from the lenses of "fictitious commodities" according to Karl Polanyi's theory of commodification, which, although not originally intended, are viewed as such in a market economy (Özel 2019). Most journals operating on either big or small budgets (if any), have to pay an honorarium to peer-reviewers and editorial teams (Murray, 2014), else there will be a high reviewers' attrition rate, which is detrimental to academic publishing. Books present a more challenging landscape and are off-limits for free reviews. Interestingly, this is not the situation in many countries in Africa; Nigeria is significant because of the number of publications generated from the country. The intriguing twist is that researchers in Nigeria are willing to volunteer their time without monetary incentives to review papers for the big international commercial publishers, but are not responsive to take up such roles for the national journals. Effect of academic colonialism at its peak!

Economic Realities of Academic Publishing in Africa

The economic reality of academic publishing in sub-Saharan Africa is deeply linked to more general systemic challenges of prioritised resource allocation and political will, laced with a bit of neo-colonialism. Many academic institutions grapple with limited resources for

research, and allocating funds for publishing often falls to the bottom of a long list of other priorities. While the most pressing challenge for Diamond OA journals in the global north is indexation and content visibility in the main research databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science and SciFinder, three-quarters (n=149/199; 74.87%) of the DOA journal respondents in Africa indicated that financial constraints are by far the most pressing challenge that affects them (Kuchma & Ševkušić, 2024). Furthermore, nearly three-quarters of open-access journals published by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) project, are either publishing infrequently or ceasing publication altogether (Teixeira da Silva, et. al., 2019; <https://journals.codesria.org/>). This is a significant setback for open-access publishing on the continent.

Funding is needed, even when publishing is driven by the most selfless intentions. So, for academic publishers in Nigeria to be viable, they are torn between sparse and inconsistent funding and sustaining knowledge visibility and dissemination that reflects our contextual realities. It is even more challenging for professional associations as the federal government has stopped funding its personnel costs. In most cases, the APCs or reader subscription charges are funding routes for these associations. In fairness, the boom of open infrastructure like repositories and the Open Journal System on the continent by the global community is expected to be leveraged to cut publishing and online migration costs. It is pertinent to note that integrating open infrastructure into existing publishing workflows to cut costs requires significant changes in institutional culture and practices. Most of these infrastructures are used only for disseminating the final research outputs. The

other publishing workflows are still run manually. Also, let's say the institutional staff are deployed as editors and secretaries, how about costs for electricity, hosting maintenance, and consumables or even allowances for reviewers?

Some of the suggestions for sustainable DOA funding in the global north is around the diversion of pooled funds hitherto earmarked for database subscriptions to DOA. For instance, Abel Polese stated the following:

- *“No subscriptions means that \$5.5K (in Canada) is saved per researcher, per year.*
- *Pool this for a whole department, say 20 faculty, and you have over \$100K to hire*
- *a part-time assistant, copy editor and even (drums roll, please) to pay reviewers.*
- *Pool this for multi-authored papers and you have even more money available”.*

While this model seems logical, there are concerns about its replication in the global south. Generally, there is scarcity of funds allocated to research and academic publishing in Nigeria. For context, a lot of university libraries can barely sustain the \$1,500 Research4life annual subscription access, which is the cheapest. There is also no specific or fixed annual budget allocated for individual researchers. In fact, the country's annual budget for education is barely the equivalent of \$2,000,000 (NISER, 2025). So where would the funds be pooled from?

Now, to the bright side of the divide. Institutional publishing is central to the ecosystem of Diamond OA publishing. Fortunately, there are some pointers that makes Nigeria a fertile ground to maintain this ecosystem. Institutions and professional associations are in charge of research journals;

there is also the increasing demand by researchers for visibility of their articles through digital platforms. Furthermore, government intervention for institutional-based journals that led to the transitioning of a good number of these journals online can be leveraged; although the viability of all of these journals cannot be ascertained.

While there is a belief that Nigerians incline more towards publishing-fees from foreign commercial publishers from the global north (Kigotho, 2021); only a small percentage of researchers share this inclination, which is mostly observed when researchers are moving to the professorial cadre. It also driven by the recent demand for publications with high impact factors from some university promotion/tenure committees. Interestingly, researchers mostly use the hybrid journals to achieve this, further exacerbating the visibility of these findings to its readers on the continent. With over 270 universities in the country, the demand for institutional-based journals for promotion/tenure assessment is still very dominant- evident in the number of academic journals available. *Besides where will researchers get the huge amount of dollars to pay for APCs?*

What needs to change

There is a growing interest of publishers wanting to flip APC-based journals to Diamond OA journals attributed to the increased awareness following the Electronic Information for Libraries, (EIFL), African Journals Online (AJOL) and the West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN) grant calls for Diamond OA journals. Reflecting on open access advocacy experiences, it is clear that some publishers genuinely strive for sustainability, to face the uphill battle of competing with global publishing giants that dominate knowledge production. Without financial

models that address local challenges, the risk of collapse is real. However, there is a thin line between sustainability and making publishing a source of funding for other activities. With the current wave of Diamond OA publishing across Africa, it is pertinent to note that there may be a tendency for academic publishers to follow the pattern of moving to the next trending global 'shining project' (Salau, et al., 2024) without proper contextualisation or succession plans.

So, this is what should change:

1. A proper needs assessment of the sustainability of Diamond OA publishing within the existing fee-based academic journals owned by institutions. The assessment must be grounded in the operational, human resource and capacity building aspects of running DOA journals and the real costs involved. If research assessment reforms that focus on high-quality, contextually-relevant, development-oriented research run concurrently with the assessment (Murray, 2014), the quantity of Salami-sliced papers will reduce. The consequence would be a significant reduction in the number of academic journals to quality journals.
2. To have an inclusive global Diamond OA ecosystem in Africa and by extension, Nigeria, funders and partners would be involved, but there must be specific terms of collaboration with government and institutional leadership. Commitment in the form of policy implementation and counterpart budgetary funding is pertinent. Researchers are busy and may unlikely optimise full time roles as managing editors, so the bulk of funding should go for the provision of professional editorial and production team, which in reality may have to fall back on other qualified non-research staff on the payroll of institutions.

3. The major government funder is investing in infrastructural support through the Academic Publishing Centres and the Tertiary Education Research and Application Systems for open access to research outputs in the country. This can be leveraged to map out strategic areas of Diamond OA. A replica of the Open Library of Humanities isn't a bad idea.
4. Although, it's a long shot, there must be reorientation of our academic culture. Publishing and all its activities must be viewed from the angle of the social value especially for early career researchers and researchers generally and particularly in other disciplines outside STEM and MINT (Mathematics, Information (computer science), Natural Sciences, and Technology), that have been at the receiving end of funding biases. There is a growing desperation to publish research for royalty among these group of researchers (Salau, et al 2024). For the time being, reviewers and editorial board members may have to continue to receive honorarium, while other noteworthy means of incentivisation is mapped out. E.g., Less work hours and more points during assessment for tenure/promotion.

Concluding Thoughts

To the question reflected on the topic of this paper-Yes! Diamond OA would bell the cat of de-commodifying academic publishing in Nigeria- Not in isolation though, the germane concerns raised here are valid. Research assessment reforms away from quantity and commercially-driven research metrics in our institutions, and effective governance structures would play a huge role. On the bright side, there is a gradual paradigm shift questioning the high volume of churned-out research outputs with little contextual impact. Thus, DOA offers the academic community in Nigeria the opportunity and power to restore

agency over ethical publishing, while fostering a culture of research knowledge as a shared public good. This, would place Nigeria, on the radar of global knowledge generators and solve the inequality in scholarly communication and publishing. If Nigeria gets it right, the DOA publishing ecosystem in Africa will expand.

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