

**Awareness, Knowledge, and Attitude Towards Predatory Journals Among
Early Career Lecturers (ECLS) in Tai Solarin Federal University Of
Education**

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Abstract

Along with the growth and increasing scale of open access publishing has come an alarming rise in predatory journals that take advantage of the author-pays model and often fail to offer legitimate editorial or peer-review service. However, early career lecturers (ECLs) face enormous 'publish or perish' pressures and they become victims of the deception of these outlets for publication. This study therefore investigated awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude of early career lecturers in Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, (TASFUED) Ijagun towards predatory journals.

A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of all 134 ECLs in TASFUED. Due to the manageable population size, a total enumeration method was adopted. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire with .78 reliability coefficient. Descriptive statistics were used to answer research questions. The findings revealed that the ECLs were aware of predatory journals ($\bar{x} = 2.44$), the ECLs knowledgeable of predatory journals ($\bar{x} = 2.30$), ECLs perception ($\bar{x} = 3.03$) and attitude ($\bar{x} = 3.03$) were moderate, while potential interventions mentioned to improve awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude of ECLs included regular seminars, publication ethics workshops and mentoring. The study concludes that raising awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude of early career lectures in TASFUED regarding predatory journals will go a long way in shielding ECLs from falling prey to predatory journals. Continuous awareness campaign, seminars and workshops on publication ethics, journal

evaluation frameworks, peer review training and institutional policies should be in place by the management of the university.

Keywords: Predatory Journals, Predatory Publishing, Early Career Lecturers, Publishing ethics, Scholarly communication, Nigeria.

Introduction

The scholarly publishing landscape has undergone significant changes in recent years, yielding many positive outcomes such as improved scholarly collaboration, quicker dissemination of scientific discoveries, and greater accessibility of knowledge. Beyond these advances, there has recently been an increase in the number of predatory journals, posing a serious risk to research integrity, academic honesty, and the credibility of published research.

Predatory journal, therefore, is any journal that exploits the open-access publishing system without adhering to the normal procedure for either editorial or peer-review. Often these journals are willing to sacrifice integrity and quality of scholarship for profit. Shen and Bjork (2015) argue that predatory journals exploit the publish-or-perish syndrome in academia by resorting to unethical practices like ghost authors, hidden editorial processes and persistent submissions of articles. Such journals particularly target researchers who may not yet be familiar with the intricacies of publication ethics, journal assessment and the realm of scholarly publishing (Xia et al., 2015). These publications are aimed particularly at early career scholars.

The term early career lecturers (ECL) could be described as those who are just beginning as lecturers in higher institutions of learning, usually in the first few years of their careers with or without PhD. Ifeanyi-Obi and Enyindah (2015) define a lecturer as someone who teaches or provides lectures at higher education institutions in the broadest sense. After completing the necessary pre-service training, the newly qualified or certified lecturers, who are in their first to fifth year of service, are known as early career lecturers. Steffy and Walfe (2001) characterizes the beginning of the teaching career as unstable. The ECLs lecturers might not be confident on what needs to be done, how to do it and what the expected outcome will be.

Predatory journals pose significant risks and ethical dilemmas for Early Career Lecturers (ECL), who are just starting their academic career and striving to create a solid publication record (Shamseer et al, 2017). In addition to the effect of individual scholars, predatory journals also affect the trust of funding agencies, institutional reputation and the credibility of the scientific literature (Beall, 2017). It

can affect the credibility of the published research results, spread false information and impact public trust in academic institutions (Cobey et al., 2018).

Researchers, whether they are just beginning their studies of the world or already have decades of experience, ultimately want to share their research and publish in well-respected, peer-reviewed journals. But lately, all this has become a serious issue in academia, threatening to the academic reputation and the academic integrity. This is because the open access publishing phenomenon has made it easy for shady publishers to take advantage of authors to generate revenue with little or no peer-review (AlRyalat, Farah, Shehadeh, Abukeshek, Aldabbas, Al-fawair and Ababneh, 2019).

But, being “greenhorns” in the publishing industry, many of the ECLs fall prey to these predatory outlets from time to time. ECLs often have limited experience conducting independent research, as well as developing a research identity and expertise in their discipline or field of study. They are also developing some of their research interests, making research plans, and identifying how they can contribute to the advancement of scholarly knowledge. Because the early career lecturers have less experience and exposure to the dynamics of scholarly publishing, are especially susceptible to the dishonest tactics of predatory journals (Beall, 2017).

A body of research has also highlighted the economic impacts of predatory publishers such as the potential for researchers to be exploited by unscrupulous publishers and extremely high publication fees (Tregoning & Mulvany, 2019). Early career lecturers are especially at risk of these financial challenges because they might not have the finances needed to cover the publishing costs and article processing charges. For young researchers just starting out it can be an even greater challenge, as they will need to publish to receive any promotion, and the ease of publishing in predatory journals, may be even more of an attraction. This is particularly true because they are yet inexperienced with academia, they may not realize what it's like and what it can do for them.

Several studies like Frandsen, (2017); Nobes & Harris (2019); Truth, (2012); Xia et al., (2015) indicate that young and inexperienced researchers from developing countries often end up publishing in predatory journals. Nwagwu (2015) stated that Africa is a more challenging region. Predatory publishers are now another way for victims to be exploited in the undeveloped world (Kurt, 2018). But it's not as simple as it may seem, as there is much evidence that predatory journal publishing is not a phenomenon unique to underdeveloped countries or to young inexperienced writers. As noted by Perlin et al. (2018), many researchers seem to be at work, regardless of their discipline, geographic location or experience.

Statement of the Problem

Publication of research results is fundamental to academic development and reputation, and researchers, including early career lecturers (ECLs), are required to publish in peer-reviewed scientific journals. ECLs, who represent the future leadership of academic institutions, are particularly vulnerable to the dishonest practices of predatory journals because of their inexperience and limited exposure to the dynamics of scholarly publishing. The proliferation of predatory publications has become a growing threat to academic integrity and institutional reputation, with implications for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Quality Education.

This problem is not merely theoretical for TASFUED. As with much of the developing world, Nigeria has witnessed a significant rise in the volume of academic research being published, raising concerns about the quality and ethical standards of such research (Akintola & Adedaja, 2019). ECLs at TASFUED, like their counterparts elsewhere, face mounting pressure to publish for promotion and confirmation, often with limited institutional guidance on how to distinguish credible journals from predatory ones. Falling victim to predatory publishing can damage an ECL's academic record, waste scarce personal funds on illegitimate publication fees, and undermine the credibility of the institution's research output. Despite the growing body of international literature on predatory publishing, there is limited empirical evidence on the awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude of early career lecturers at TASFUED specifically towards predatory journals, and on the interventions that could protect them. It is against this background that this study investigated the attitude, awareness, knowledge and perception of early career lecturers on the issue of predatory journal publication at Tai Solarin Federal University of Education.

Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of the study was to investigate awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude of early career lecturers (ECL) towards predatory journals in Tai Solarin Federal University of Education. The specific objectives was to:

1. find the level of awareness that TASFUED's lecturers in their early careers have about predatory journals;
2. determine the degree of knowledge that TASFUED's early career lecturers have about the publication of predatory journals;
3. examine the perception of TASFUED's early career lecturers towards predatory journals;
4. investigate the attitude of TASFUED's early career lecturers towards the publication of predatory journals;

5. identify possible interventions to improve early career TASFUED lecturers' awareness, knowledge, and attitudes about predatory journal publication.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Predatory Journal

Predatory journals are publications that exploit the open-access, author-pays model of scholarly publishing without providing the editorial oversight and peer review associated with legitimate journals (Frandsen, 2017; Cobey et al., 2018). Shen and Björk (2015) note that the number of such journals grew rapidly as publishers sought to profit from the pressure on academics to publish, and Grudniewicz et al. (2019) observe that predatory publishing damages the credibility of the scientific record and undermines trust in genuine open-access journals. Because these journals rely on the publish-or-perish culture in academia, early career academics who are still building their publication records are frequently their target (Xia et al., 2015).

Awareness of Early Career Lecturers on Predatory Journals

Studies on awareness of predatory journals among early career academics have produced mixed results. Xia et al. (2015), Laine and Winker (2017), Kharumnuid and Deo (2024) and Almeida et al. (2026) reported that early career researchers were reasonably aware of the existence and basic features of predatory journals, even while under pressure to publish. In contrast, Kimani, Maina and Ndung'u (2021), in a cross-sectional survey of Kenyan academics, found that awareness of predatory journals was low among early career lecturers, pointing to considerable variation across institutional and national contexts.

Knowledge of Early Career Lecturers on Predatory Journals

Beyond simple awareness, knowledge of the specific tactics predatory journals use to appear legitimate has also been studied. Cobey et al. (2019), Nicholas et al. (2021) and Tenopir et al. (2023) found that early career academics generally recognised common predatory tactics such as weak peer review, aggressive solicitation and misleading editorial claims. However, Curiel-Marín et al. (2023), surveying 198 Spanish doctoral students, masters students and early-stage lecturers, found comparatively little knowledge of predatory journals or the risks of publishing or reviewing for them, underscoring that familiarity with these tactics cannot be assumed even among research-active early career staff.

Perception and Attitude of Early Career Lecturers towards Predatory Journals

Perception and attitude findings tend to sit between the extremes suggested by the awareness and knowledge literature. Kharumnuid and Deo (2024) found that

early career researchers held a moderate perception of predatory journals even where awareness existed but was not comprehensive, a pattern also reported by Abayomi, Mohammed and Oladapo (2020) and Moshi et al. (2025) among early career lecturers in East Africa. With respect to attitude, Kurt (2018) found that many early career scholars expressed mixed views towards predatory journals rather than outright acceptance or rejection, while Xia et al. (2015) similarly reported that only a minority of early career authors who had published in predatory journals were active proponents of the practice; most expressed doubt or neutrality about the legitimacy of the outlets they had used.

Interventions to Improve Awareness, Knowledge, Perception and Attitude towards Predatory Journals

Training-based interventions have consistently been linked to improvements in how early career academics relate to predatory journals. Nyirabahutu, Mugisha and Gakuru (2021) found that a structured training programme significantly improved participants' ability to identify predatory behaviours and increased their scepticism towards suspicious publishing offers. This is consistent with guidance from the Committee on Publication Ethics (2019) and Power (2018), who recommend institutional workshops, publication ethics training and mentorship as core strategies for protecting early career researchers, and with Marar et al. (2026), who found that structured education training improved both the awareness and perception of researchers regarding predatory journals.

Methodology

This study used descriptive research design. All the 134 early career lecturers in all the six colleges in TASFUED, Ijagun make up the study's population. Total enumeration method was used for the study to get all the early career lecturers in all the six colleges in the university. Structured questionnaire was used for quantitative data collection from the lecturers concerning their level of awareness, knowledge and attitude towards predatory journals. The questionnaire was validated and the coefficient of reliability was .78. A response rate of 76.11% was achieved.

Results

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness that TASUED's lecturers in their early careers have about predatory journals.

Table 1: Level of awareness of predatory journals

S/n	Awareness	Highly Aware	Aware	Not aware	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev
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1	I am aware of the existence of predatory journals.	65 (63.7%)	30 (29.4%)	7 (6.9%)	2.57	0.62
2	I am aware the importance of peer review in scholarly publishing.	66 (64.7%)	28 (27.5%)	8 (7.8%)	2.57	0.66
3	I am aware the significance of publishing in reputable journals for academic advancement.	61 (59.8%)	33 (32.4%)	8 (7.8%)	2.52	0.66
4	I am aware the potential consequences of publishing in predatory journals for their academic career.	62 (60.8%)	30 (29.4%)	10 (9.8%)	2.51	0.69
5	I am aware with the risks associated with publishing in predatory journals.	60 (58.8%)	32 (31.4%)	10 (9.8%)	2.49	0.69
6	I am aware the importance of conducting thorough research on potential journals before submission.	59 (57.8%)	34 (33.3%)	9 (8.8%)	2.49	0.67
7	I am aware of the ethical considerations involved in choosing a journal for publication.	58 (56.9%)	34 (33.3%)	10 (9.8%)	2.47	0.69
8	I am aware about the indexing and impact factor of reputable journals.	56 (54.9%)	35 (34.3%)	11 (10.8%)	2.44	0.70
9	I am aware about the characteristics of predatory journals.	55 (53.9%)	36 (35.3%)	11 (10.8%)	2.43	0.71
10	I am aware how predatory journals may exploit their lack of experience in academic publishing.	52 (51.0%)	38 (37.3%)	12 (11.8%)	2.39	0.71
11	I am aware of the methods used by predatory journals to appear legitimate.	49 (48.0%)	41 (40.2%)	12 (11.8%)	2.36	0.71
12	I am aware with the consequences of publishing in predatory journals for academic institutions.	50 (49.0%)	39 (38.2%)	13 (12.7%)	2.36	0.72

13	I am aware on how to identify predatory journals from legitimate ones.	50 (49.0%)	38 (37.3%)	14 (13.7%)	2.35	0.74
14	I am aware with resources available to verify the legitimacy of journals.	48 (47.1%)	40 (39.2%)	14 (13.7%)	2.33	0.74
15	I am aware about the potential legal and ethical issues associated with predatory journal publishing.	46 (45.1%)	44 (43.1%)	12 (11.8%)	2.33	0.70
Average mean =					2.44	0.69

Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.33 = Not aware; 1.34 to 2.66 = Not aware; 2.67 to 4.00 = Highly aware;

Table 1 shows that the average mean score for awareness of predatory journals among TASUED's early career lecturers was 2.44 (SD = 0.69), which falls within the "aware" category on the decision scale. This indicates that early career lecturers at TASUED are generally aware of predatory journals.

Research Question Two: What is the degree of knowledge that TASUED's early career lecturers have about the publication of predatory journals.

Table 2: Degree of knowledge about the publication of predatory journals

S/n	Knowledge	Highly knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Not Knowledgeable	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev
1	I understand the significance of publishing in reputable journals for academic advancement.	58 (56.9%)	31 (30.4%)	13 (12.7%)	2.44	0.71
2	I have knowledge with the importance of avoiding predatory journals for the integrity of their research.	55 (53.9%)	35 (34.3%)	12 (11.8%)	2.42	0.69
3	I possess knowledge about the importance of peer review in scholarly publishing.	54 (52.9%)	35 (34.3%)	13 (12.7%)	2.40	0.70

4	I understand the importance of conducting thorough research on potential journals before submission.	53 (52.0%)	37 (36.3%)	12 (11.8%)	2.4 0	0.7 0
5	I understand the risks associated with publishing in predatory journals.	52 (51.0%)	36 (35.3%)	14 (13.7%)	2.3 7	0.7 2
6	I have knowledge familiar with the consequences of publishing in predatory journals for academic institutions.	49 (48.0%)	39 (38.2%)	14 (13.7%)	2.3 4	0.7 2
7	I understand the potential consequences of publishing in predatory journals for their academic career.	50 (49.0%)	36 (35.3%)	16 (15.7%)	2.3 3	0.7 4
8	I have knowledge of the tactics predatory journals use to attract submissions.	48 (47.1%)	37 (36.3%)	17 (16.7%)	2.3 0	0.7 4
9	I have knowledge about the characteristics of predatory journals.	45 (44.1%)	40 (39.2%)	17 (16.7%)	2.2 7	0.7 3
10	I have knowledge of the methods used by predatory journals to appear legitimate.	44 (43.1%)	41 (40.2%)	17 (16.7%)	2.2 6	0.7 4
11	I possess knowledge about alternative publishing options to predatory journals.	43 (42.2%)	40 (39.2%)	19 (18.6%)	2.2 4	0.7 5
12	I possess sufficient knowledge to identify predatory journals from legitimate ones.	42 (41.2%)	39 (38.2%)	21 (20.6%)	2.2 1	0.7 7

13	I have knowledge with resources available to verify the legitimacy of journals.	40 (39.2%)	41 (40.2%)	21 (20.6%)	2.1 9	0.7 6
14	I have received adequate training or guidance on how to discern predatory journals.	38 (37.3%)	42 (41.2%)	22 (21.6%)	2.1 6	0.7 5
15	I have access to reliable information sources to stay updated on predatory journal practices.	37 (36.3%)	44 (43.1%)	21 (20.6%)	2.1 6	0.7 4
Average mean					2.3 0	0.7 3

Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.33 = Not knowledgeable; 1.34 to 2.66 = Knowledgeable; 2.67 to 4.00 = Highly knowledgeable;

Table 2 shows that the average mean score for knowledge of predatory journal publication among TASUED's early career lecturers was 2.30 (SD = 0.73), placing them within the "knowledgeable" category. Respondents were most knowledgeable about the significance of publishing in reputable journals and the importance of peer review, but comparatively less knowledgeable about the specific tactics predatory journals use to appear legitimate and about the resources available for verifying journal legitimacy. It could be concluded that early career lecturers at TASUED are knowledgeable about the publication of predatory journals.

Research Question Three: What is the perception of TASUED's early career lecturers towards the publication of predatory journals?

Table 3: Perception towards the publication of predatory journals

	Perception	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev
1	I believe that institutions should play a more active role in educating about predatory journals.	60 (58.8%)	32 (31.4%)	7 (6.9%)	3 (2.9%)	3.46	0.76
2	I believe that publishing in	58 (56.9%)	35 (34.3%)	6 (5.9%)	3 (2.9%)	3.45	0.74

	predatory journals negatively impacts their academic reputation.						
3	I perceive predatory journals as compromising the integrity of academic scholarship.	56 (54.9%)	34 (33.3%)	8 (7.8%)	4 (3.9%)	3.40	0.78
4	Predatory journals are perceived as detrimental to the overall quality and integrity of academic publishing.	54 (52.9%)	36 (35.3%)	8 (7.8%)	4 (3.9%)	3.37	0.78
5	Predatory journals are perceived as exploiting the publish-or-perish culture prevalent in academia.	55 (53.9%)	32 (31.4%)	10 (9.8%)	5 (4.9%)	3.34	0.83
6	I perceive predatory journals as hindering their career advancement opportunities.	50 (49.0%)	38 (37.3%)	10 (9.8%)	4 (3.9%)	3.32	0.80
7	I believe that collaborative efforts are needed to combat the influence of predatory journals in academia.	52 (51.0%)	35 (34.3%)	10 (9.8%)	5 (4.9%)	3.32	0.81
8	I perceive predatory journals as a barrier to gaining recognition and respect in their field.	50 (49.0%)	34 (33.3%)	13 (12.7%)	5 (4.9%)	3.27	0.84

9	I believe predatory journals are easily distinguishable from reputable ones.	18 (17.6%)	33 (32.4%)	30 (29.4%)	21 (20.6%)	2.47	1.00
10	I believe that publishing in predatory journals is sometimes necessary due to the pressure to publish.	10 (9.8%)	25 (24.5%)	40 (39.2%)	27 (26.5%)	2.17	0.93
Average mean =						3.16	0.83

Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.66 = Low; 1.67 to 3.32 = Moderate; 3.33 to 5.00 = High;

Table 3 shows that the average mean score for perception of predatory journal publication among TASUED's early career lecturers was 3.16 (SD = 0.83), indicating a moderate perception overall. Respondents largely agreed that institutions should play a more active role in educating staff about predatory journals and that publishing in such journals damages academic reputation and scholarly integrity, but were less certain about their own ability to distinguish predatory journals from legitimate ones. It could be concluded that the perception of TASUED's early career lecturers towards the publication of predatory journals was moderate.

Research Question Four: What is the attitude of TASUED's early career lecturers towards the publication of predatory journals?

Table 4: Attitude towards the publication of predatory journals

S/n	Attitude	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std. Dev
1	I believe publishing in predatory journals compromises the quality of academic research	60 (58.8%)	30 (29.4%)	8 (7.8%)	4 (3.9%)	3.43	0.78
2	I perceive predatory journal publication as detrimental to the credibility of	55 (53.9%)	35 (34.3%)	10 (9.8%)	2 (2.0%)	3.40	0.74

	academic institutions.						
3	I believe promotion and tenure review committees should be concerned about predatory open access journals	52 (51.0%)	36 (35.3%)	10 (9.8%)	4 (3.9%)	3.34	0.80
4	I believe my field/profession should be concerned about predatory open access journals.	50 (49.0%)	38 (37.3%)	9 (8.8%)	5 (4.9%)	3.31	0.82
5	I feel it is valuable to discuss how to assess journal quality with my colleagues and students	42 (41.2%)	40 (39.2%)	13 (12.7%)	7 (6.9%)	3.14	0.87
6	I know who to ask when I have questions about assessing a journal's quality	40 (39.2%)	38 (37.3%)	15 (14.7%)	9 (8.8%)	3.07	0.91
7	I feel confident in my ability to assess the quality of journal	35 (34.3%)	45 (44.1%)	15 (14.7%)	7 (6.9%)	3.06	0.85
8	I feel pressured by their academic institutions to publish in any journal, including predatory ones.	28 (27.5%)	35 (34.3%)	25 (24.5%)	14 (13.7%)	2.76	0.98
9	I feel pressured to publish in predatory journals due to the lack of visibility of their research in reputable journals.	20 (19.6%)	33 (32.4%)	30 (29.4%)	19 (18.6%)	2.53	0.99
10	Predatory journals provide a viable avenue for me to	12 (11.8%)	25 (24.5%)	40 (39.2%)	25 (24.5%)	2.24	0.95

disseminate their
research findings.

Average mean =	3.03	0.87
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Decision Rule if mean is ≤ 1.66 = Low; 1.67 to 3.32 = Moderate; 3.33 to 5.00 = High;

Table 4 shows that the average mean score for attitude towards predatory journal publication among TASUED's early career lecturers was 3.03 (SD = 0.87), indicating a moderate attitude overall. Respondents expressed concern about the negative impact of predatory publishing on academic quality and institutional credibility, while a smaller proportion admitted to feeling pressured to publish in any available journal, including predatory ones. It could be concluded that the attitude of TASUED's early career lecturers towards the publication of predatory journals was moderate.

Research Question Five: What are the potential interventions available to enhance awareness, knowledge, and attitudes towards predatory journal publication among early career lecturers?

Table 5: Potential interventions available to enhance awareness, knowledge, Perception and attitudes towards predatory journal publication

S/n	Intervention	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Workshops and Seminars	88	86.3
2	Publication Ethics Workshops	84	82.4
3	Ongoing Support and Consultation	83	81.4
4	Institutional Policies and Guidelines	82	80.4
5	Awareness Campaigns	79	77.5
6	Access to Resources	78	76.5
7	Faculty Development Programs	76	74.5
8	Online Training Modules	75	73.5
9	Collaboration with Library Services	74	72.5
10	Peer Review Training	72	70.6
11	Faculty Mentorship Programs	70	68.6
12	Quality Control Measures	69	67.6
13	Collaborative Research Projects	67	65.7
14	Peer Discussions and Forums	66	64.7
15	Case Studies and Scenarios	65	63.7
16	Guest Lectures	63	61.8

17	Peer Review Clubs	61	59.8
18	Regular Updates and Newsletters	60	58.8
19	Regular Faculty Meetings	59	57.8
20	Reward Systems	55	53.9

Table 5 shows that the interventions most frequently identified by TASUED's early career lecturers to improve their awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude towards predatory journals were workshops and seminars (86.3%), publication ethics workshops (82.4%), ongoing support and consultation (81.4%), and institutional policies and guidelines (80.4%), with reward systems (53.9%) rated as the least favoured intervention. It could be inferred that the major potential interventions available to enhance awareness, knowledge, and attitudes towards predatory journal publication among early career lecturers are workshops and seminars, publication ethics workshops and ongoing support and consultation.

Discussion of Findings

The result of this study indicated that the early career lecturers who were surveyed were fairly aware of predatory publishing. The early career lecturers were familiar with the main features of predatory journals such as absence of peer review and article processing charges. This finding is consistent with that of Xia et al. (2015); Laine and Winker (2017); Kharumnuid and Deo (2024) and Almeida et al. (2026) who reported that early career lecturers were clearly aware of predatory journals, even under the pressure of publications. The authors' finding contradicts the finding by Kimani, Maina, and Ndung (2021) which was done through a cross-sectional survey of early career lecturers in Kenya, the awareness about predatory journals was low among the academics in Kenya.

When asked, early career lecturers were found to be knowledgeable of predatory journals. They are aware of how to identify predatory journals from legitimate ones, understand the possible impacts on academic career if they publish in predatory journals, they know about the significance of peer review in academic publishing and they know how predatory journals attempt to appear legitimate. This aligns with the results of many studies (Xia et al., 2015; Cobey et al., 2019; Nicholas et al., 2021; and Tenopir et al., 2023) that have found that early career lecturers are now aware of the common attributes of predatory journals (transparency in peer review, editorial claims, aggressive solicitations, etc.). This result contradicts the one found by Curiel-Marín et al. (2023) that 198 Spanish doctoral, master and early stage lecturers, and master students, had little knowledge of predatory journals and the risks associated with publishing or reviewing in them. The results of this study

confirmed that early careers are not completely uninformed; they do have some basic knowledge.

This study has also found that the perception of the early career lecturers toward predatory publishing was moderate, despite the high level of awareness among the lecturers. This finding is consistent with the submission of, Kharumnuid and Deo (2024) that submitted that early career researchers reflected a moderate perception level, while awareness exist but it is not comprehensive. In the same way, the discovery backs up another study conducted in Tanzania by Abayomi, Mohammed, and Oladapo (2020); Moshi, et al. (2025), which established that often time, early career lecturers' perception is neither fully informed nor completely uninformed, rather somewhere between.

In addition, results indicated that the attitude of novice lecturers with respect to predatory journals was moderate. The discovery indicated that the early career academics have some awareness and knowledge about predatory publishing, but they were not entirely resistant or accepting of predatory journals. This outcome is a product of the interplay of awareness, career stress, and institutional academic expectations for publishing decisions made by early career lecturers. This is similar to Kurt's (2018) study of what it takes to publish in predatory journals, in which a large number of early career scholars described mixed attitudes towards publishing in these journals. This co-existence of ethical reservations and practical considerations helps to account for a moderate attitude among early-career lecturers. Wisely, this discovery reaffirms the discovery of (Xia et al. 2015) that not all early academics who published papers in predatory journals were proponents of predatory publishing, but rather a fair number of authors expressed doubt or neutral attitudes about the legitimacy of the publishing house in question.

These findings also identified potential interventions to make within the university to enhance awareness, knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of early career lecturers towards predatory journals. Some of them included workshop and seminars, publication ethic workshop, ongoing support and consultation, institutional Policies and Guidelines awareness campaign, faculty mentorship programs and an improved access to resources. This finding aligns with the findings of the Committee on Publication Ethics (2019), Power (2018); Nyirabahutu, Mugisha & Gakuru (2021) which showed that there was a significant improvement in the knowledge, attitude and practices of healthcare workers on predatory publishers following educational intervention. Likewise, the result is consistent with Marar et al. (2026) who found that education training improved the awareness and perceptions of researchers about predatory journals.

Conclusion

This study examined the awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude of early career lecturers at Tai Solarin Federal University of Education (TASFUED) towards predatory journal publication, and identified interventions that could strengthen their capacity to avoid falling victim to predatory journals. In relation to the first objective, the study concludes that early career lecturers at TASFUED are generally aware of predatory journals, although their awareness of more technical warning signs remains limited. On the second objective, the study concludes that early career lecturers possess a fair level of knowledge of predatory journal publication practices, but are less equipped to detect the specific tactics predatory journals use to appear legitimate. On the third objective, the study concludes that early career lecturers hold a moderate perception of predatory journals, recognising the threat such journals pose to academic integrity without being fully confident in their own ability to identify them. On the fourth objective, the study concludes that early career lecturers hold a moderate attitude towards predatory journal publication, shaped by the tension between ethical concerns and the pressure to publish for career advancement. On the fifth objective, the study concludes that workshops and seminars, publication ethics workshops, ongoing support and consultation, and clear institutional policies and guidelines are the interventions most likely to improve early career lecturers' awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude towards predatory journals. Overall, the study concludes that while early career lecturers at TASFUED are not completely uninformed about predatory journals, deliberate and sustained institutional intervention is required to close the remaining gaps in their awareness and knowledge and to shield them from falling prey to predatory publishing practices.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The management of TASFUED should organise regular workshops and seminars on predatory journal identification and publication ethics for early career lecturers, given that this was the most highly rated intervention.
2. The university library, in collaboration with faculties, should provide early career lecturers with practical training and accessible resources for verifying the legitimacy and indexing status of journals before submission.
3. Institutional policies and guidelines that explicitly address predatory journal publication should be developed and communicated to early career lecturers as part of their orientation and ongoing professional development.

4. Senior academics and research mentors should be encouraged to provide ongoing support and consultation to early career lecturers on journal selection and scholarly publishing decisions.
5. Promotion and appraisal committees should incorporate journal quality checks into their review processes, so that early career lecturers are not unduly pressured to publish quickly in journals of uncertain standing.
6. Further research should be conducted across other Nigerian universities to determine whether the patterns of awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude found among TASFUED's early career lecturers hold true nationally.

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