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AFRICAN RESEARCHERS' DEPENDENCE ON WESTERN PUBLICATION JOURNALS OVER AFRICAN JOURNALS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AFRICAN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING[i]

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Abstract:
The scholarly publishing landscape in Africa is characterized by a persistent reliance on Western publication journals, a trend that carries significant implications for knowledge sovereignty, local development, and the sustainability of African scholarly ecosystems. This article critically examines the drivers of this dependence, including institutional reward structures, global visibility imperatives, funding dynamics, and the limited capacity of African journals. It explores the consequences of such reliance, highlighting how it undermines epistemic autonomy, marginalizes indigenous knowledge systems, reduces accessibility for local policymakers and practitioners, and perpetuates intellectual dependency. Drawing on context-specific examples from Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya, the article identifies pathways toward sustainability, including strengthening journal infrastructure, promoting open-access models, incentivizing publication in reputable African journals, fostering regional collaboration, and integrating culturally grounded research methods. The study emphasizes the critical role of policy interventions in reinforcing local knowledge production, ensuring equitable access, and cultivating epistemic diversity. The article argues that achieving sustainable African scholarly publishing requires coordinated efforts to reclaim intellectual sovereignty and align research dissemination with the continent's developmental priorities.

Keywords: African researchers, dependence, Western publication journals, African journals, sustainability, African scholarly publishing

[i] DÉPENDANCE DES CHERCHEURS AFRICAINS À L'ÉGARD DES REVUES DE PUBLICATION OCCIDENTALES AU DÉTRIMENT DES REVUES AFRICAINES : IMPLICATIONS POUR LA DURABILITÉ DE L'ÉDITION SCIENTIFIQUE AFRICAINE

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Résumé:
Le paysage de l'édition scientifique en Afrique se caractérise par une dépendance persistante aux revues scientifiques occidentales, une tendance qui a des implications significatives pour la souveraineté du savoir, le développement local et la durabilité des écosystèmes scientifiques africains. Cet article examine de manière critique les facteurs qui sous-tendent cette dépendance, notamment les structures de récompense institutionnelles, les impératifs de visibilité mondiale, les dynamiques de financement et la capacité limitée des revues africaines. Il explore les conséquences de cette dépendance, en soulignant comment elle compromet l'autonomie épistémique, marginalise les systèmes de connaissances indigènes, réduit l'accessibilité pour les décideurs et praticiens locaux et perpétue la dépendance intellectuelle . S'appuyant sur des exemples contextuels spécifiques au Cameroun, au Nigéria, en Afrique du Sud et au Kenya, l'article identifie des pistes vers la durabilité, notamment le renforcement des infrastructures éditoriales, la promotion de modèles en libre accès, l'incitation à publier dans des revues africaines réputées, le développement de collaborations régionales et l'intégration de méthodes de recherche culturellement ancrées. L'étude souligne le rôle crucial des interventions politiques pour renforcer la production de connaissances locales, assurer un accès équitable et favouriser la diversité épistémique. En définitive, l'article soutient que la réalisation d'un système durable de publication scientifique en Afrique nécessite des efforts coordonnés pour reprendre le contrôle intellectuel et aligner la diffusion de la recherche sur les priorités de développement du continent.

Mots-clés : chercheurs Africains, dépendance, revues de publication occidentales, revues Africaines, durabilité, édition scientifique Africaine

1. Introduction

The geography of academic knowledge production remains deeply unequal, and nowhere is this more evident than in the global architecture of scholarly publishing. While Africa has experienced significant growth in higher education enrolment, research output, and international academic engagement over the past three decades, the structures that validate and disseminate knowledge remain disproportionately anchored in the Global North. For many African researchers, publishing in Western academic journals is not merely a professional aspiration but an institutional expectation, often tied to promotion, funding, and academic legitimacy (Altbach, 2015; Teferra, 2016). This reality creates a paradox: African scholarship is increasingly produced on the continent but continues to be validated, archived, and circulated largely outside it.

The persistence of this dynamic cannot be understood outside its historical context. Colonial educational systems established epistemic hierarchies that positioned Western knowledge systems as universal while relegating African intellectual traditions to the periphery. These hierarchies were reproduced in postcolonial academic institutions through inherited evaluation metrics, curricular models, and publication norms

(Mamdani, 2011). Even as African universities expanded after independence, the infrastructures necessary for autonomous knowledge production—robust journals, indexing systems, and publishing ecosystems—remained underdeveloped. As a result, African scholars seeking recognition within global academia often found themselves navigating systems that privileged Western outlets as primary arbiters of scholarly credibility.

In contemporary academia, this structural imbalance is reinforced by the prestige economy that governs scholarly communication. Journal rankings, citation indices, and impact factors—many of which are controlled by Western-based indexing platforms—serve as proxies for academic quality (Moed, 2017). African universities, eager to improve global visibility, frequently align promotion and tenure criteria with these metrics. Consequently, researchers are incentivized to publish in journals indexed in dominant databases rather than in African journals that may have regional relevance but limited international visibility. For example, early-career academics in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa often report being advised to "publish internationally" as a prerequisite for career progression, even when their research addresses local educational, health, or governance challenges (Nwagwu, 2013).

This publishing preference has far-reaching implications beyond individual career trajectories. When African research is systematically exported to Western publication platforms, local journals are deprived of the submissions necessary to sustain editorial quality, regular publication cycles, and citation impact. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle: low submissions lead to low visibility, which in turn discourages future submissions. Many African journals struggle with irregular publication schedules, limited peer-review pools, and fragile funding models, challenges that are exacerbated when local scholars bypass them in favour of Western outlets (Mouton, 2010). In extreme cases, journals cease publication altogether, eroding the institutional memory and intellectual continuity necessary for long-term scholarly growth.

Beyond institutional sustainability, the dominance of Western publication outlets raises deeper epistemic concerns. Knowledge is not neutral; it is shaped by the contexts in which it is produced and disseminated. When African research is filtered through Western editorial frameworks, there is a risk that locally grounded insights are reframed to align with external theoretical paradigms or audience expectations. Studies on indigenous education systems, community health practices, or African language pedagogies, for instance, may be compelled to foreground theoretical debates that resonate with Western academia rather than prioritize local applicability. This dynamic can dilute contextual relevance and contribute to what scholars describe as epistemic dependency—the structural reliance on external systems for knowledge validation (Beigel, 2020).

The implications extend further into questions of intellectual sovereignty and development. Sustainable knowledge systems require local platforms that can nurture emerging scholars, host context-sensitive debates, and bridge research with policy and practice. African journals historically played such roles, serving as spaces where

regionally grounded scholarship could flourish and inform national development agendas. However, when these journals are marginalized, the continent risks weakening its own intellectual infrastructures. Research findings relevant to African realities may remain inaccessible to local policymakers, educators, and practitioners if published primarily in paywalled or geographically distant outlets.

It is important, however, to avoid simplistic binaries that frame Western journals as inherently problematic or African journals as inherently virtuous. Publishing in international outlets can enhance visibility, foster collaboration, and integrate African scholarship into global conversations. The issue, therefore, is not the act of publishing internationally but the structural imbalance that renders African journals secondary within their own intellectual ecosystems. A sustainable scholarly future for Africa requires a more balanced publishing ecology—one in which African journals are not merely symbolic but function as credible, competitive, and well-supported platforms for knowledge dissemination.

This paper interrogates the dependence of African researchers on Western publication journals and their implications for the sustainability of African scholarly publishing. It adopts a critical lens that situates publication preferences within broader debates on epistemic justice, academic prestige economies, and postcolonial knowledge systems. By examining the structural drivers and intellectual consequences of this dependence, the discussion seeks to foreground an urgent but often under-theorized challenge: the sustainability of African journals as foundational pillars of the continent's knowledge future. Ultimately, the paper argues that addressing this imbalance is not only a matter of academic reform but a necessary step toward intellectual self-determination and sustainable scholarly development in Africa.

1.1 Historical Context of Academic Publishing in Africa

Contemporary dependence of African researchers on Western publication outlets requires a historically grounded analysis of how academic publishing evolved across the continent. The structures that shape today's scholarly communication systems are not accidental; they are products of layered colonial, postcolonial, and global transformations that have systematically positioned Africa on the margins of global knowledge production. Tracing this trajectory reveals how historical inequalities in publishing infrastructures continue to shape current patterns of scholarly dependency.

The roots of formal academic publishing in Africa are deeply embedded in colonial educational systems. During the colonial period, institutions of higher learning in Africa were primarily extensions of European intellectual traditions, designed to serve administrative, missionary, and extractive economic interests. Knowledge production was largely oriented toward metropolitan centres, and scholarly dissemination was controlled by European presses and academic societies (Mamdani, 2011). African intellectual contributions, when documented, were often mediated through colonial intermediaries who determined what constituted legitimate knowledge.

In this context, early scholarly writing about Africa was frequently produced by European scholars and published in Western journals, reinforcing the perception that intellectual authority resided outside the continent. Indigenous knowledge systems were either marginalized or appropriated without institutional recognition. Consequently, Africa entered the modern academic era with limited local publishing infrastructures and deeply entrenched epistemic hierarchies that privileged Western validation (Altbach, 2015).

The period following independence in the 1950s and 1960s marked a turning point in the development of academic publishing in Africa. Newly independent states invested in higher education as part of broader nation-building projects. Universities were established or expanded across countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Tanzania, and with them emerged early attempts to create local scholarly journals. These journals often reflected strong intellectual ambition and ideological commitment to Africanization of knowledge. They served as platforms for debates on development, culture, language, and governance, providing spaces where African scholars could articulate postcolonial visions of identity and progress. For example, early journals in the humanities and social sciences became sites of intellectual resistance, challenging colonial narratives and promoting indigenous perspectives (Mouton, 2010).

However, despite these aspirations, many of these journals faced structural limitations from inception. Financial constraints, limited printing infrastructure, and weak distribution networks hindered sustainability. Unlike Western journals supported by established academic presses and subscription markets, African journals often relied on fragile university funding or state subsidies.

As African universities expanded in the 1970s and 1980s, the growth of academic publishing did not keep pace with institutional development. Economic crises across many African countries during the 1980s, coupled with structural adjustment programs, significantly reduced state investment in higher education. Libraries struggled to maintain subscriptions, university presses declined, and journal production became increasingly irregular (Teferra, 2016).

This period marked a critical turning point. While Western academic publishing industries were consolidating and expanding globally, African publishing infrastructures were contracting. Many journals ceased publication altogether, and those that survived often did so with diminished capacity. The gap between African and Western publishing ecosystems widened, reinforcing dependence on external publication platforms.

Moreover, the decline of local publishing institutions coincided with the increasing globalization of academic evaluation systems. As African scholars sought international collaboration and recognition, Western journals became more attractive as stable and visible outlets. Over time, this shift normalized the practice of exporting African research to external publication systems.

The late 20th century witnessed the consolidation of global knowledge hierarchies shaped by citation indices, journal rankings, and impact metrics. Major indexing platforms emerged as powerful gatekeepers of scholarly visibility, yet African journals

were significantly underrepresented within these systems (Beigel, 2020). This exclusion had long-term consequences for the perceived legitimacy of African scholarship. The dominance of English as the lingua franca of global academia further complicated the landscape. Many African scholars operating in multilingual environments faced the dual challenge of linguistic translation and publication access. Francophone and Lusophone African journals, in particular, struggled to gain visibility within Anglophone-dominated indexing systems, reinforcing linguistic and regional inequalities. These developments entrenched the idea that publishing in Western journals was not merely advantageous but necessary for academic survival. As universities increasingly adopted global metrics to evaluate research productivity, the marginalization of African journals became institutionalized.

The advent of digital publishing in the early 21st century introduced both disruption and opportunity for African scholarly publishing. Online platforms reduced printing and distribution costs, enabling the emergence of digital journals and repositories across the continent. Initiatives such as regional journal aggregators and open-access platforms expanded the accessibility of African research and created new pathways for visibility (Nwagwu, 2013).

Digital transformation also facilitated greater South–South collaboration, allowing African journals to reach broader audiences without relying solely on traditional Western distribution networks. However, the benefits of digitalization have been unevenly distributed. While some journals successfully transitioned to online platforms, others faced barriers related to internet infrastructure, technical expertise, and funding. At the same time, digital globalization intensified competition. African journals now operate in an environment where they compete directly with well-resourced international publishers in the online space. Without strong indexing and digital marketing strategies, many remain overshadowed despite improvements in accessibility.

1.2 Enduring Legacies and Contemporary Implications

The historical evolution of academic publishing in Africa reveals a pattern of interrupted development shaped by colonial foundations, postcolonial aspirations, economic disruptions, and global academic restructuring. These historical layers continue to influence contemporary scholarly behaviour. The dependence of African researchers on Western publication outlets is not merely a present-day preference but the cumulative outcome of decades of structural imbalance.

Importantly, this historical context challenges deficit narratives that attribute the marginalization of African journals solely to quality concerns. Many sustainability challenges are rooted in systemic inequities that limited the growth of local publishing ecosystems. Recognizing this history reframes current debates from questions of capability to questions of structural justice and institutional reform.

Situating present-day publication dependency within its historical trajectory underscores the urgency of strengthening African journals as part of broader knowledge decolonization efforts. Sustainable scholarly publishing in Africa requires

acknowledging that current imbalances are historically produced and therefore demand historically informed solutions. Efforts to revitalize African journals must address not only technical gaps but also the enduring legacies of epistemic marginalization. The historical context of academic publishing in Africa reveals both fragility and resilience. While African journals have faced significant structural challenges, they have also demonstrated remarkable persistence in sustaining local intellectual traditions. Building on this legacy requires renewed commitment from scholars, institutions, and policymakers to reimagine publishing systems that prioritize African knowledge production and dissemination within globally interconnected but more equitable academic landscapes.

2. Tracing the Dynamics of African Researchers' Dependence on Western Publication Journals

African researchers' dependence on Western publication journals requires moving beyond surface-level explanations to interrogate the layered historical, structural, institutional, and psychological dynamics that sustain this pattern. This dependence is not accidental; rather, it is the outcome of entrenched global academic asymmetries shaped by colonial legacies, knowledge hierarchies, and contemporary evaluation systems that continue to privilege Western publication infrastructures.

2.1 Colonial Foundations and Epistemic Hierarchies

The roots of publication dependency can be traced to colonial-era knowledge systems that established Western epistemologies as universal standards of intellectual legitimacy. Colonial universities and missionary education systems in Africa were designed primarily as extensions of European intellectual traditions, positioning Western academic institutions as centres of knowledge production and validation (Mamdani, 2011). African intellectual contributions were rarely institutionalized within local publishing platforms, and when early African scholarship emerged, it often relied on European presses for visibility and legitimacy. These colonial hierarchies created enduring epistemic templates that still shape how scholarly credibility is perceived across many African academic spaces.

Even after independence, the inherited academic structures in African universities remained largely intact. Curricula, citation norms, and research evaluation frameworks continued to mirror Western standards, including expectations regarding publication venues. As a result, African scholars seeking recognition within global academia naturally gravitated toward Western journals, which were seen as gatekeepers of intellectual authority (Altbach, 2015). This historical continuity has normalized external validation as a default academic pathway.

2.2 Globalization and the Prestige Economy of Academic Publishing

In the contemporary era, the globalization of higher education has deepened these dynamics through what many scholars describe as the "prestige economy" of academic publishing. Journal rankings, impact factors, and citation indices serve as key markers of academic excellence, yet these metrics are largely controlled by Western-based indexing systems (Moed, 2017). African researchers, particularly those seeking international mobility or collaborative opportunities, are often compelled to align with these metrics to remain competitive.

For instance, in several African universities, including institutions in Cameroon, South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, promotion criteria explicitly prioritize publications indexed in databases such as Web of Science or Scopus. Even in countries where national journals exist, they are frequently undervalued if not indexed internationally. This dynamic creates a structural incentive for scholars to prioritize Western outlets regardless of the geographic relevance of their research. The consequence is a misalignment between research content and publication location, where locally grounded studies are exported to foreign journals that may not primarily serve African audiences.

2.3 Institutional Incentive Structures

Institutional policies play a significant role in reinforcing publication dependency. Many African universities adopt performance evaluation systems that reward international publications through financial incentives, accelerated promotions, or recognition awards. In Nigeria, for example, some universities offer monetary rewards for publications in high-impact international journals while providing limited support for local journal publishing. Similarly, academics in East African institutions often report that doctoral supervision and postdoctoral funding opportunities are tied to international publication records (Nwagwu, 2013).

This institutional orientation is further compounded by global university ranking pressures. As African universities strive for international visibility, administrators encourage faculty to publish in journals that contribute to global metrics. In doing so, institutional strategies unintentionally weaken local journals by diverting high-quality submissions away from them. The paradox is that while universities aspire to global relevance, they may simultaneously undermine the local publishing ecosystems necessary for sustainable knowledge production.

2.4 Funding, Collaboration, and Knowledge Gatekeeping

External research funding also shapes publication trajectories. Many international funding agencies require grantees to publish in journals with broad global reach, which often translates into Western publication outlets. Collaborative research partnerships with Northern institutions may similarly influence publication decisions, with lead authorship and journal selection frequently skewed toward established Western venues (Teferra, 2016).

In such collaborations, African researchers may occupy peripheral roles in the publishing process, contributing data or field access while publication decisions are guided by Northern partners. This dynamic can reproduce knowledge gatekeeping structures where African scholarship is mediated through external editorial systems. Over time, such patterns reinforce perceptions that global legitimacy is attainable primarily through Western publishing circuits.

2.5 Indexing Inequalities and Visibility Gaps

Another critical dynamic lies in the uneven representation of African journals within global indexing systems. Major citation databases have historically underrepresented journals from the Global South, limiting their visibility and perceived impact (Beigel, 2020). This structural exclusion creates a self-reinforcing cycle: journals that are not indexed struggle to attract submissions, and without high-quality submissions, they remain unindexed.

For African researchers, the implications are practical and immediate. Publishing in non-indexed journals may reduce citation visibility, affect grant competitiveness, and weaken academic profiles. Consequently, even scholars who recognize the value of African journals may avoid them for strategic career reasons. This tension between intellectual commitment and professional survival is a defining feature of the dependency dynamic.

2.6 Psychological Dimensions and Internalized Hierarchies

Beyond structural forces, psychological and cultural dimensions also contribute to publication dependency. The internalization of academic hierarchies often manifests as a perception that Western journals inherently guarantee quality while African journals are viewed as secondary or less rigorous. Such perceptions are not merely individual biases but reflections of broader systemic narratives embedded in academic training and mentorship cultures.

Early-career researchers, in particular, are socialized into these hierarchies through doctoral supervision, peer networks, and academic conferences where success stories are often framed around international publications. Over time, this socialization produces what may be described as an internalized prestige orientation, where scholars equate academic excellence with Western validation even in the absence of explicit institutional pressure.

2.7 Digital Transformation and Emerging Paradoxes

The digital era has introduced new complexities into the dependency dynamic. On one hand, open-access platforms and digital publishing technologies have lowered barriers to journal creation and dissemination across Africa. On the other hand, digital globalization has intensified competition, with African journals now competing directly with well-resourced international publishers in online visibility and indexing.

Moreover, the rise of predatory publishing has added another layer of ambiguity. Some African researchers, wary of low-quality outlets falsely claiming international legitimacy, may gravitate even more strongly toward established Western journals as safe options. Ironically, the proliferation of questionable journals has sometimes reinforced the perception that credibility lies primarily outside the continent.

2.8 A Self-reinforcing Cycle of Dependency

Taken together, these dynamics reveal that African researchers' dependence on Western publication journals is not simply a matter of preference but a self-reinforcing system shaped by historical legacies, institutional incentives, global metrics, and internalized academic cultures. The more scholars publish externally, the weaker local journals become; and the weaker local journals appear, the less attractive they become to prospective authors. This cycle perpetuates structural imbalances that undermine the development of robust African publishing ecosystems.

Tracing these dynamics is essential for understanding that publication dependency is not merely an individual behavioural issue but a systemic phenomenon embedded in global knowledge economies. Any meaningful attempt to address the sustainability of African scholarly publishing must therefore engage with these intersecting forces rather than attributing responsibility solely to individual researchers. Recognizing the structural nature of the problem opens the door to more nuanced interventions that combine institutional reform, policy realignment, and shifts in academic culture.

3. Statement of the Problem

African scholarly publishing is confronted with a persistent structural paradox: while the continent continues to expand its research output, much of its intellectual capital is disproportionately channelled into Western-based journals, often at the expense of African journals and publishing ecosystems. This imbalance raises fundamental concerns about knowledge ownership, epistemic autonomy, and the long-term sustainability of African scholarly communication. Despite increasing calls for decolonising knowledge production and promoting contextually grounded scholarship, African researchers still exhibit strong dependence on Western publication outlets, particularly those indexed in global citation databases and associated with high impact metrics (Tijssen, 2007; Nwagwu, 2013).

At the heart of the problem lies the academic reward structure that governs research productivity across many African universities. Promotion criteria, grant competitiveness, and institutional prestige are frequently tied to publications in journals indexed by platforms such as Web of Science and Scopus, most of which are dominated by publishers based in Europe and North America (Mouton & Valentine, 2017). Consequently, African scholars often perceive local journals as less valuable or even professionally risky, regardless of their relevance to local knowledge needs. For instance,

early-career academics in countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Cameroon have reported strategic publication choices driven by promotion requirements rather than research relevance, leading them to bypass African journals even when studying local issues (Smart et al., 2018). This structural incentive system systematically marginalises African journals and undermines their growth.

A related dimension of the problem concerns epistemic misalignment. Western journals often prioritise theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and research questions that align with global North scholarly traditions. African researchers, in adapting their work to fit these expectations, may dilute indigenous knowledge systems, local research priorities, and culturally grounded methodologies (Connell, 2014). For example, studies in African education or public health are frequently reframed to appeal to global audiences, resulting in the underrepresentation of community-based epistemologies and policy-relevant insights that are vital for local development. This trend contributes to what has been described as "epistemic extractivism," where African data are exported but contextual intellectual ownership remains limited (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019).

The economic implications further deepen the problem. Many Western journals operate within costly publishing models, including high article processing charges (APCs) associated with open access publishing. African scholars, often working within resource-constrained environments, face significant financial barriers in publishing their work internationally (Nabyonga-Orem et al., 2020). Ironically, when African research is successfully published abroad, it may become financially inaccessible to African institutions that cannot afford subscription fees, thereby limiting intra-continental knowledge circulation. Meanwhile, African journals struggle with chronic underfunding, irregular publication cycles, weak indexing, and limited digital infrastructure, conditions exacerbated by the outflow of high-quality manuscripts to Western outlets (Leman et al., 2021).

Another critical issue is the symbolic hierarchy embedded in global knowledge production. Western journals are widely perceived as arbiters of scholarly legitimacy, reinforcing a prestige economy that privileges external validation over internal scholarly ecosystems (Altbach, 2015). This dynamic perpetuates a cycle in which African journals are undervalued, under-cited, and underdeveloped, not necessarily due to inferior scholarship but due to structural marginalisation. For example, even when African journals maintain rigorous peer-review standards, their limited visibility in global indexing platforms diminishes their citation impact, further discouraging submissions and institutional investment.

The sustainability implications of this dependency are profound. Without consistent submissions of high-quality research, African journals face challenges in maintaining editorial quality, attracting reviewers, and achieving indexing benchmarks required for international visibility. This creates a self-reinforcing loop: weak journal visibility discourages submissions, and low submission rates prevent quality improvements. Over time, this dynamic threatens the viability of African publishing

platforms, undermining the continent's capacity to curate its own scholarly narratives and research agendas (Onyancha, 2016).

Moreover, the dependence on Western journals raises questions about knowledge accessibility and developmental relevance. Research addressing African problems—such as local educational reforms, indigenous psychological frameworks, or community health innovations—may remain inaccessible to practitioners, policymakers, and local scholars if published behind paywalls or in outlets with limited African readership (Chan et al., 2015). This disconnect weakens the translational impact of research and contributes to the persistent gap between knowledge production and societal transformation across the continent.

The problem is not merely one of publication preference but reflects a deeper structural and epistemic imbalance within global scholarly communication. African researchers' reliance on Western journals simultaneously reflects and reinforces systemic inequalities in academic recognition, resource distribution, and knowledge validation. If left unaddressed, this dynamic threatens the sustainability of African scholarly publishing, weakens continental knowledge sovereignty, and perpetuates intellectual dependency. Addressing this problem therefore requires not only institutional reforms within Africa but also a critical re-evaluation of global academic publishing hierarchies that continue to shape research visibility and legitimacy.

4. African Journals and Sustainability for African Scholarly Publishing

The sustainability of African journals is not merely an administrative or financial concern; it is fundamentally tied to the intellectual autonomy and long-term scholarly vitality of the continent. Academic journals function as more than repositories of research findings—they shape research agendas, define scholarly standards, and cultivate intellectual communities. When African journals struggle to survive, the implications extend beyond publication logistics to the very architecture of knowledge production in Africa.

4.1 African Journals as Intellectual Infrastructure

African journals serve as critical intellectual infrastructures for contextual scholarship. They provide platforms for research grounded in African realities—whether in education, public health, agriculture, governance, or indigenous knowledge systems. For example, studies examining bilingual education in Cameroon, land tenure systems in Ghana, or community-based health interventions in rural Kenya may find more nuanced engagement within African-based journals that understand these contexts. Yet when such research is systematically exported to Western publication outlets, local journals are deprived of the scholarship that could strengthen their visibility, citation base, and editorial maturity.

Sustainability, therefore, must be understood in relational terms. Journals depend on consistent submissions, qualified peer reviewers, editorial stability, and financial backing. However, when high-quality manuscripts are diverted to Western journals due to prestige incentives, African journals struggle to maintain publication frequency and impact. Mouton (2010) notes that the uneven distribution of research outputs across global publication systems contributes to the marginal positioning of African scholarly platforms. This marginalization is not due to intellectual deficiency but to systemic imbalances in global knowledge circulation.

4.2 Structural and Financial Fragilities

Many African journals operate within fragile institutional environments characterized by limited funding, inadequate digital infrastructure, and volunteer-based editorial labor. Unlike major Western publishing houses that benefit from subscription models, commercial investments, and global distribution networks, most African journals rely on university subventions or donor support (Nwagwu, 2013). This dependence creates financial instability, particularly in contexts where universities themselves face budgetary constraints.

For instance, several university-based journals across West and Central Africa experience irregular publication cycles due to funding delays or limited access to professional publishing software. In some cases, editorial boards function without dedicated administrative staff, relying on overburdened academics who manage journal processes alongside heavy teaching loads. Such conditions affect turnaround times, peer-review quality, and overall competitiveness.

Moreover, sustainability challenges are compounded by limited access to indexing platforms. Many African journals are not included in dominant citation databases, reducing their international visibility and citation potential. Beigel (2020) argues that indexing inequalities reinforces global academic hierarchies by privileging journals located in the Global North. When African journals remain under-indexed, they are perceived as lower impact, regardless of content quality. This perception discourages submissions from ambitious researchers who fear career stagnation.

4.3 Quality, Perception, and the Legitimacy Question

Sustainability is also deeply entangled with issues of perceived quality and legitimacy. A persistent narrative suggests that Western journals uphold higher editorial standards, more rigorous peer-review systems, and stronger ethical safeguards. While quality variation exists across all global regions, the blanket assumption that African journals are inherently less rigorous reflects internalized epistemic hierarchies (Altbach, 2015).

In reality, many African journals have made substantial improvements in editorial processes, adopting international best practices in peer review, plagiarism screening, and digital archiving. South African journals, for example, have gained increased global visibility through structured accreditation and indexing reforms. Yet in other parts of the

continent, progress remains uneven due to resource limitations rather than intellectual inadequacy.

The challenge, therefore, is not simply technical but reputational. Sustainability requires restoring confidence among African scholars that local journals are credible spaces for high-quality scholarship. This demands consistent editorial standards, transparent review processes, and improved dissemination mechanisms. However, these improvements are difficult to achieve without steady manuscript inflow and institutional support—illustrating the cyclical nature of the sustainability problem.

4.4 Policy Environments and Institutional Commitment

The sustainability of African journals is closely linked to policy environments within universities and national research councils. Where promotion criteria prioritize "international" publications without recognizing reputable African outlets, local journals are indirectly undermined. Teferra (2016) observes that African flagship universities often measure success through alignment with global ranking systems, inadvertently sidelining local publishing platforms.

In contexts such as Ethiopia and Tanzania, efforts to strengthen local journals through government-supported accreditation systems have demonstrated that policy alignment can enhance credibility and encourage submissions. When national research bodies recognize and fund domestic journals, sustainability prospects improve. Conversely, in countries where no structured support exists, journals struggle to compete in the global knowledge economy. Thus, sustainability is inseparable from governance. African governments and higher education commissions must view scholarly publishing as strategic infrastructure rather than optional academic activity. Investment in digital repositories, journal management systems, and editorial training is essential for long-term viability.

4.5 Open Access, Digital Transformation, and Opportunity

The digital era presents both challenges and opportunities for African journals. Open-access publishing models have the potential to democratize knowledge dissemination and expand readership across the continent. By removing paywalls, African journals can increase accessibility for students, policymakers, and practitioners who may lack subscription access to Western databases.

However, open access also requires sustainable funding models. Without article processing charges (APCs) or institutional subsidies, many journals struggle to cover operational costs. The risk of predatory publishing further complicates the landscape, as low-quality outlets exploit the open-access model, eroding trust in legitimate African journals. Digital platforms such as African Journals Online (AJOL) have demonstrated that regional aggregation and indexing initiatives can enhance visibility and credibility. Expanding such continental collaborations could reduce isolation and foster shared standards across journals.

4.6 Epistemic Sovereignty and Intellectual Self-reliance

At its core, the sustainability of African journals is a question of epistemic sovereignty—the capacity to produce, validate, and disseminate knowledge on African terms. When local journals decline, African scholarship becomes increasingly mediated through external systems, reinforcing dependency. These dynamic limits the continent's ability to shape research priorities aligned with its developmental realities.

Sustainable African journals create spaces for context-sensitive debates that might not fit dominant Western paradigms. They nurture early-career researchers, provide mentorship opportunities, and preserve intellectual histories specific to African societies. Without such platforms, the intellectual ecosystem becomes externally oriented and potentially disconnected from grassroots realities.

4.7 Toward a Sustainable Future

Ensuring sustainability requires coordinated, multi-level strategies. Universities must revise promotion frameworks to value credible African journals. Governments should establish national publishing funds and invest in digital infrastructure. Editorial boards must adopt transparent governance and strengthen peer-review mechanisms. Most importantly, African researchers themselves must recognize that sustaining local journals is not an act of compromise but an investment in intellectual independence.

Sustainability is ultimately relational and collective. It depends on researchers submitting their best work locally, institutions providing financial and policy backing, and regional networks collaborating to enhance standards and visibility. If African journals are strengthened, they can serve not only as publication outlets but as engines of knowledge transformation across the continent.

5. Reflections on Cameroon

Situating the debate on African researchers' dependence on Western publication outlets within the Cameroonian context reveals a nuanced landscape shaped by colonial legacies, bilingual academic traditions, institutional constraints, and evolving research cultures. Cameroon presents a particularly instructive case because of its dual Anglophone–Francophone heritage, which influences not only academic language but also publication trajectories and scholarly identities. Understanding how Cameroonian researchers navigate publication choices provides critical insight into broader continental patterns of dependency and sustainability.

5.1 Historical and Structural Context

Cameroon's academic publishing culture is deeply rooted in its colonial history, having inherited both British and French educational traditions. This dual heritage has produced a fragmented academic ecosystem in which publication norms are influenced by two distinct global knowledge spheres. Francophone scholars often align with European publishing circuits, particularly French journals, while Anglophone scholars tend to

gravitate toward British or North American outlets. This bifurcation reinforces external validation pathways and weakens the consolidation of a unified national publishing culture (Teferra, 2016).

Post-independence expansion of higher education led to the establishment of several state universities and research institutions. However, the development of robust local publishing infrastructures lagged behind institutional growth. While university-based journals emerged—particularly in education, social sciences, and agriculture—many struggled with irregular funding, limited indexing, and inconsistent editorial capacity. Consequently, Cameroonian scholars seeking academic recognition often perceived international publication as the most viable pathway to legitimacy (Altbach, 2015).

5.2 Institutional Incentives and Academic Evaluation

Institutional evaluation systems in Cameroon play a decisive role in shaping publication behaviour. Academic promotions are heavily tied to publication records, with a strong emphasis on international visibility. In many public universities, criteria for advancement implicitly prioritize publications in internationally indexed journals, often without a parallel framework for recognizing high-quality African journals. This creates a structural disincentive for publishing locally, even among scholars who recognize the relevance of Cameroonian journals.

For early-career academics, the pressure is particularly acute. Doctoral graduates seeking recruitment or tenure-track stability are frequently advised to "publish internationally" to strengthen their academic portfolios. In practice, this guidance often translates into targeting Western journals indexed in global databases. The result is a generational reproduction of publication dependency, where young scholars internalize the idea that academic success is inseparable from Western validation (Mamdani, 2011).

Moreover, the scarcity of structured research funding amplifies this trend. Many Cameroonian researchers operate within resource-constrained environments, where limited access to grants and laboratory infrastructure makes international collaboration attractive. Such collaborations, while beneficial, often influence publication decisions, with journal selection skewed toward Western outlets that enhance funding credibility.

5.3 Linguistic Dynamics and Publication Pathways

Language plays a critical but often underexamined role in shaping publication choices in Cameroon. As a bilingual country, scholars must navigate English and French publication ecosystems, both of which are externally oriented. For Anglophone researchers, publishing in international English-language journals is frequently perceived as a gateway to global scholarly engagement. For Francophone scholars, alignment with European French-language journals offers similar prestige incentives.

However, this linguistic duality complicates the development of strong national journals. Local journals often struggle to balance bilingual publication demands, which can strain editorial resources and limit international indexing opportunities. In some

cases, Cameroonian journals adopt English as the dominant language to enhance visibility, inadvertently reinforcing the global hierarchy that privileges Anglophone publication circuits (Beigel, 2020).

5.4 Perceptions of Quality and Academic Prestige

A persistent challenge within the Cameroonian research community is the perception that Western journals inherently guarantee higher quality and rigor. While this perception reflects global academic narratives, it also reveals internalized hierarchies that shape scholarly decision-making. Many Cameroonian researchers equate international publication with intellectual excellence, even when local journals maintain credible peer-review processes.

This perception is reinforced by academic mentorship structures. Senior academics who built their careers through international publishing often advise mentees to follow similar pathways. While such advice is pragmatic, it can inadvertently delegitimize local journals and perpetuate dependency cycles. Over time, this creates a reputational asymmetry in which Cameroonian journals are viewed as secondary outlets reserved for preliminary or less competitive work.

This narrative obscures important realities. Several Cameroonian journals, particularly in education and development studies, have contributed significantly to regional scholarship and policy discourse. Their marginalization is less a reflection of intellectual quality than of structural inequalities in indexing and global visibility (Mouton, 2010).

5.5 Editorial and Infrastructure Constraints

The sustainability challenges facing Cameroonian journals are closely tied to infrastructural limitations. Many university journals operate without dedicated publishing budgets, relying instead on sporadic institutional support or donor funding. Editorial boards often consist of academics who juggle journal management alongside heavy teaching and administrative workloads. This affects turnaround times, peer-review consistency, and digital dissemination.

Limited digital infrastructure further constrains visibility. While some journals have migrated online, many lack robust journal management systems, DOI registration, or inclusion in major indexing platforms. These limitations reduce discoverability and citation potential, discouraging submissions from researchers concerned about academic impact.

The absence of strong national indexing systems exacerbates the problem. Without centralized databases showcasing Cameroonian journals, local research outputs remain fragmented and underrepresented in global knowledge networks. This invisibility reinforces the perception that impactful scholarship must be published externally.

5.6 Emerging Shifts and Local Agency

Despite these challenges, there are emerging signs of transformation within Cameroon's scholarly landscape. The growth of digital repositories, regional collaborations, and open-access initiatives is gradually expanding the visibility of local scholarship. Younger scholars, particularly those engaged in decolonial and African-centered research movements, are increasingly questioning the automatic privileging of Western journals.

Professional associations and university presses have also begun exploring strategies to strengthen local publishing ecosystems. Workshops on academic writing, peer-review training, and journal digitization reflect growing awareness that sustainable scholarly development requires robust local platforms. However, these efforts remain uneven and require stronger institutional backing to achieve systemic impact.

5.7 A Tension between Pragmatism and Responsibility

A defining feature of the Cameroonian case is the tension between pragmatic career considerations and broader intellectual responsibility. On one hand, researchers operate within a global academic economy that rewards international publication. On the other hand, sustained reliance on Western outlets risks weakening national journals and limiting Cameroon's intellectual autonomy.

This tension is particularly evident in disciplines closely tied to local realities, such as education, public health, and linguistics. Research addressing Cameroon-specific issues such as multilingual education policy, community health interventions, or conflict-sensitive pedagogy in Anglophone regions often has immediate local relevance. When such work is published primarily in foreign journals, its accessibility to local policymakers and practitioners becomes limited, reducing its societal impact.

5.8 Toward a Reflexive Publishing Culture

A critical analysis of researchers in Cameroon suggests that addressing publication dependency requires more than structural reforms; it demands reflexivity within the academic community. Scholars must critically interrogate how their publication choices shape national knowledge ecosystems. While international publishing remains valuable, a balanced approach that includes strategic investment in credible local journals is essential for long-term sustainability.

Developing such a culture requires institutional reforms that recognize African journals in promotion frameworks, national investments in publishing infrastructure, and mentorship models that value intellectual responsibility alongside global competitiveness. Ultimately, the sustainability of Cameroonian scholarly publishing will depend on whether researchers view local journals not as fallback options but as integral components of a vibrant and self-sustaining intellectual ecosystem.

6. Drivers of Dependence on Western Journals

The persistent reliance of African researchers on Western-based journals is underpinned by a complex interplay of structural, institutional, epistemic, and economic drivers. These factors collectively shape scholarly behaviour and influence where African academics choose to publish, often to the detriment of local journals and the broader sustainability of African scholarly publishing. Understanding these drivers is critical for diagnosing the structural imbalances in global knowledge production and for identifying pathways to strengthen African journals.

6.1 Institutional Reward Systems and Academic Prestige

One of the most prominent drivers is the institutional emphasis on publishing in journals recognized by global citation indexes such as Web of Science and Scopus. African universities frequently link academic promotions, tenure decisions, and research grants to publications in these high-impact outlets (Mouton & Valentine, 2017). For instance, in South African and Nigerian universities, promotion criteria often explicitly prioritize papers in internationally indexed journals, with little recognition for local journals regardless of their scholarly quality or local relevance (Smart et al., 2018). This institutional reward system creates a strong incentive for researchers to prioritize Western journals, even when their work addresses African contexts.

6.2 Perceived Global Visibility and Citation Impact

Researchers often perceive Western journals as platforms that confer higher global visibility and credibility. Articles published in these journals are more likely to be cited internationally, which is linked to career advancement, institutional rankings, and research funding opportunities (Tijssen, 2007). For example, a study on public health interventions in Cameroon reported that scholars were motivated to submit to European journals because doing so increased the likelihood of international collaboration and recognition, despite African journals being more contextually relevant (Nabyonga-Orem et al., 2020). This perception of prestige creates a feedback loop where African journals struggle to attract high-quality submissions, reinforcing their marginalization.

6.3 Funding and Collaboration Networks

The dependence on Western journals is also influenced by research funding patterns. Many African scholars rely on grants from international organizations and donors that are often linked to Western institutions and require dissemination in globally recognized journals (Altbach, 2015). Additionally, international collaborations frequently involve partners from the Global North who encourage or even mandate publication in journals aligned with Western academic standards. In practical terms, an African researcher collaborating with a European university on educational research might be expected to submit findings to journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, bypassing local journals even if their study has high regional relevance (Connell, 2014).

6.4 Limited Capacity and Resources of African Journals

African journals often face systemic challenges that limit their appeal to researchers. These include irregular publication schedules, limited digital infrastructure, low indexing in international databases, and insufficient funding for editorial management and peer review (Leman et al., 2021). Such constraints make publishing in African journals appear riskier, particularly for early-career researchers who must demonstrate productivity in prestigious outlets. For example, a survey of Nigerian social science journals revealed that inconsistent issue releases and lack of online submission systems were key factors discouraging submissions (Nwagwu, 2013).

6.5 Epistemic and Methodological Alignment

Western journals frequently prioritize research framed within global North theoretical paradigms, methodological rigor aligned with mainstream conventions, and topics of international interest (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019). African researchers, in an effort to gain acceptance and credibility, often adapt their work to fit these expectations, which can involve de-emphasizing local knowledge systems or context-specific insights. For instance, studies in African indigenous education or community health are sometimes reframed to align with quantitative or experimental methods favoured by Western journals, even when qualitative, participatory, or indigenous approaches may be more appropriate for local contexts. This epistemic alignment reinforces dependence on Western outlets.

6.6 Economic Incentives and Access Considerations

While Western journals often have high subscription fees, they are sometimes accessible to African researchers via institutional licenses, collaborations, or open-access models supported by funding agencies. Conversely, many African journals struggle to achieve wide distribution and visibility, limiting the potential readership for published work (Chan et al., 2015). The economic calculus thus favours publishing in Western journals, particularly when career advancement, funding recognition, and potential international collaborations are at stake.

6.7 The Symbolic Hierarchy of Scholarly Legitimacy

Underlying many of these drivers is the symbolic hierarchy that privileges Western knowledge production as the standard of excellence. Western journals are widely regarded as gatekeepers of scholarly legitimacy, whereas African journals are perceived—often incorrectly—as less rigorous or prestigious (Onyancha, 2016). This perception influences author behaviour, reinforcing patterns of dependence even among scholars committed to African-focused research agendas.

The dependence of African researchers on Western journals is not merely a matter of personal preference but reflects a structural convergence of institutional policies, funding dynamics, epistemic norms, journal capacity, and perceived prestige. Each of these drivers compounds the marginalization of African journals, undermining their

ability to attract high-quality submissions and threatening the long-term sustainability of African scholarly publishing. Addressing these drivers requires coordinated interventions at institutional, national, and continental levels, including the creation of supportive publication incentives, capacity-building for African journals, and deliberate strategies to enhance the visibility and credibility of locally grounded scholarship.

7. Implications for Knowledge Sovereignty and Development

The reliance of African researchers on Western publication journals carries profound implications for knowledge sovereignty and the continent's developmental trajectory. Knowledge sovereignty refers to the capacity of a society to produce, validate, disseminate, and apply knowledge that is reflective of its own priorities, cultural contexts, and developmental needs (Connell, 2014). When African scholarly work is predominantly published in Western journals, this sovereignty is compromised, with consequences that extend beyond academia to governance, policy-making, and social innovation.

7.1 Erosion of Epistemic Autonomy

Dependence on Western journals often forces African researchers to conform to epistemological frameworks and methodological norms established outside the continent. This can result in the underrepresentation of indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and culturally grounded research methods (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019). For example, studies on traditional healing practices or community-based education initiatives are often reframed to fit quantitative, experimental, or theoretical frameworks preferred by Western journals, marginalizing rich qualitative insights and local epistemologies. Over time, this epistemic misalignment erodes Africa's ability to define and validate knowledge on its own terms, leaving critical cultural, social, and scientific narratives shaped by external priorities.

7.2 Limited Policy Relevance and Societal Impact

Research published in Western journals is often inaccessible to African policymakers, practitioners, and community stakeholders due to paywalls, language barriers, or contextual misalignment (Chan et al., 2015). Consequently, evidence that could inform local development—ranging from public health interventions to educational reforms—is frequently disconnected from local decision-making processes. For instance, a study on maternal health outcomes in rural Cameroon published in a high-impact European journal may have limited uptake by local health authorities due to accessibility issues, while a similar study in a local African journal could directly influence health policy and practice. The mismatch between knowledge production and local application undermines the developmental potential of research.

7.3 Intellectual Dependency and Global Knowledge Hierarchies

Publishing predominantly in Western journals reinforces structural inequalities in the global knowledge economy. African scholars contribute data and insights, yet intellectual authority and recognition often remain concentrated in institutions and editorial boards located in the Global North (Altbach, 2015). This dynamic perpetuates a cycle of intellectual dependency, where African knowledge is validated externally, cited less within African scholarly networks, and often detached from African development priorities. The result is a paradox in which African research is globally visible but locally underutilized, weakening the continent's capacity to leverage its own scholarship for social and economic advancement.

7.4 Threats to Cultural Representation and Contextual Knowledge

Western journals may undervalue or misinterpret culturally embedded practices, local languages, and context-specific social phenomena (Tijssen, 2007). For example, research exploring indigenous educational practices, conflict resolution mechanisms, or traditional environmental management strategies risks being reframed through Western theoretical lenses, potentially distorting findings. This not only diminishes the authenticity of African scholarship but also limits the documentation and preservation of local knowledge for future generations. African journals, by contrast, are uniquely positioned to capture and valorize such context-specific knowledge, promoting both cultural continuity and locally relevant development solutions.

7.5 Constraints on Building a Sustainable Scholarly Ecosystem

Dependence on Western outlets undermines the growth of African journals, which are critical for fostering knowledge sovereignty. When high-quality research consistently bypasses African journals, local editors struggle to maintain rigorous peer-review standards, attract skilled reviewers, and achieve visibility in global indexing platforms (Leman et al., 2021). Without robust local publishing platforms, African scholars remain reliant on external validation, reinforcing cycles of dependency and weakening the continent's long-term capacity to control its research agenda.

7.6 Implications for Developmental Innovation

Knowledge produced and circulated locally is more likely to inform development interventions that respond directly to African realities. By relying on Western journals, the translation of research into practical solutions for agriculture, health, education, and technology is slowed or limited (Nabyonga-Orem et al., 2020). Conversely, African journals that are accessible, contextually relevant, and aligned with local policy priorities can facilitate a faster, more effective connection between research and development outcomes. For example, locally published studies on climate-resilient farming techniques or indigenous conflict mediation strategies can directly inform regional programs, strengthening the continent's adaptive capacities.

The dominance of Western journals in African research dissemination has significant implications for knowledge sovereignty and development. It restricts epistemic autonomy, limits the societal relevance of research, perpetuates intellectual dependency, and undermines the sustainability of local scholarly ecosystems. Promoting African journals and local knowledge networks is therefore not only a matter of academic visibility but a strategic imperative for asserting intellectual independence and fostering development that is informed, contextually grounded, and culturally relevant. Strengthening African scholarly publishing can empower researchers, policymakers, and communities to own and leverage their knowledge for sustainable development.

8. Pathways toward Sustainability and Redress

Addressing African researchers' dependence on Western journals requires a deliberate, multi-layered strategy that strengthens local scholarly publishing while ensuring African knowledge is visible, accessible, and influential both locally and globally. Sustainability and redress in African scholarly publishing are not merely about increasing the number of journals; they require systemic reforms in institutional policies, funding mechanisms, infrastructure, editorial capacity, and epistemic recognition.

8.1 Strengthening Institutional Policies and Incentives

African universities and research institutions must realign academic promotion and evaluation frameworks to recognize and reward publications in high-quality African journals. For example, the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and the University of Cape Town in South Africa have begun incorporating African journal publications into promotion criteria, emphasizing local relevance and impact (Smart et al., 2018). By embedding institutional incentives that value contributions to local knowledge ecosystems, scholars are encouraged to publish contextually meaningful research within African journals, reducing overreliance on Western outlets.

8.2 Enhancing Journal Quality and Visibility

The sustainability of African journals depends heavily on their ability to maintain rigorous peer-review processes, timely publication schedules, and digital accessibility. Investment in editorial training, modern submission and review platforms, and indexing in reputable databases can enhance journal credibility. For instance, the African Journals Online (AJOL) initiative has demonstrated that coordinated digital platforms can increase the visibility and citation impact of African journals, attracting higher-quality submissions (Nwagwu, 2013). African governments and academic consortia can support this by providing funding for journal infrastructure, reviewer incentives, and editorial capacity-building programs.

8.3 Promoting Open Access and Affordable Publishing Models

Financial barriers, particularly high article processing charges (APCs) in international journals, often exacerbate dependence on Western outlets. African journals can adopt open-access publishing models, possibly supported by government subsidies, institutional consortia, or philanthropic funding, to ensure that high-quality research remains accessible to African scholars, policymakers, and practitioners (Chan et al., 2015). For example, the Pan African Medical Journal offers open-access publishing, enabling local and regional uptake of research findings without prohibitive costs. Such models facilitate knowledge circulation within Africa, enhancing both research impact and societal relevance.

8.4 Building Collaborative and Regional Knowledge Networks

African journals can benefit from regional collaboration and partnerships to share editorial expertise, peer reviewers, and indexing strategies. Networks such as the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) provide platforms for inter-institutional mentorship and training in scholarly publishing. By fostering collaboration across Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone countries, journals can increase their regional appeal, pool resources, and strengthen editorial standards, creating a more robust and sustainable publishing ecosystem (Leman et al., 2021).

8.5 Centering Indigenous Knowledge and Contextual Relevance

African journals should prioritize research that reflects local realities, indigenous knowledge systems, and culturally grounded methodologies. This not only enhances epistemic sovereignty but also ensures that scholarship directly informs policy and development interventions. For example, studies on indigenous agricultural practices in Kenya or community-based health initiatives in Cameroon are more effectively disseminated and utilized when published in African journals attuned to local contexts (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019). Encouraging context-specific research reduces the pressure to conform to Western epistemic norms and fosters authentic knowledge production.

8.6 Leveraging Technology for Accessibility and Impact

Digital publishing platforms, social media dissemination, and integration with global indexing services can elevate African journals' visibility without compromising local accessibility. Initiatives such as AJOL and Research4Life have shown that technology can bridge visibility gaps, allowing African research to reach both regional and international audiences. Furthermore, journals can implement multilingual publication strategies, offering abstracts and summaries in local languages to broaden community engagement and policy uptake (Nabyonga-Orem et al., 2020).

8.7 Policy and Funding Interventions by Governments and Regional Bodies

Sustainable redress also requires systemic support from governments, regional bodies, and continental organizations. African Union frameworks, national research councils, and ministries of higher education can provide grants specifically earmarked for capacity-building of local journals, covering peer-review training, digital infrastructure, and marketing initiatives. For example, the South African National Research Foundation provides funding support to enhance local scholarly publication, ensuring African knowledge is published, accessible, and impactful (Mouton & Valentine, 2017).

8.8 Cultivating a Culture of Local Knowledge Valuation

Finally, achieving sustainability requires a cultural shift within the academic community, emphasizing the value of African journals as legitimate venues for high-quality research. Workshops, seminars, and advocacy campaigns highlighting successful African-led research published in local journals can gradually alter perceptions of prestige and reduce the ingrained hierarchy favouring Western outlets (Altbach, 2015). Cultivating pride in locally grounded scholarship strengthens the continent's intellectual identity and fosters long-term resilience in African publishing ecosystems.

Pathways toward sustainability and redress are multidimensional, encompassing institutional reform, infrastructural investment, policy support, epistemic affirmation, and cultural change. By strategically addressing these areas, African scholarly publishing can reduce dependence on Western journals, assert knowledge sovereignty, and enhance the continent's contribution to both local development and global academic discourse. Sustainability is achieved not merely through survival but through robust systems that empower African researchers to publish, disseminate, and utilize knowledge on their own terms.

9. Policy Implications

The dependence of African researchers on Western publication journals has far-reaching policy implications for higher education, research governance, and the sustainability of scholarly publishing across the continent. Policies at institutional, national, and regional levels can either reinforce this dependency or serve as instruments to strengthen African knowledge ecosystems. Crafting effective policy responses requires a nuanced understanding of the structural, economic, and epistemic dynamics driving publication practices.

9.1 Institutional Research and Promotion Policies

A critical policy implication concerns the alignment of university promotion and tenure criteria with the development of African journals. Current policies in many African universities heavily reward publications in high-impact Western journals, inadvertently discouraging contributions to local journals (Smart et al., 2018). Policymakers within universities and national higher education authorities need to revise these criteria to

explicitly value publications in reputable African journals. For example, Nigeria's National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Cameroon, Joint Recruitment And Promotions Board: Commission Consultative Inter-Universitaire ***(C.C.I.U),*** could implement policies that recognize impactful publications in local journals for academic promotion, balancing global visibility with local relevance. Institutionalizing these incentives, universities would encourage researchers to publish in African journals, thereby strengthening local scholarly ecosystems.

9.2 Funding and Resource Allocation Policies

Government and funding agency policies directly affect the capacity of African journals to operate sustainably. Many African journals struggle with underfunding, limited digital infrastructure, and inconsistent publication schedules (Leman et al., 2021). National research councils, ministries of higher education, and regional bodies can create dedicated funding streams to support journal infrastructure, peer review systems, and open-access initiatives. For example, South Africa's National Research Foundation provides grants aimed at improving local journal quality, which could serve as a model for other African countries. Such policy interventions would reduce the economic barriers that currently drive researchers toward Western journals.

9.3 Open Access and Knowledge Accessibility Policies

Open access policies are crucial for increasing the visibility and societal impact of African research. African governments and institutions can mandate that publicly funded research be published in accessible African journals or open-access platforms. The African Union's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024) underscores the importance of open-access knowledge dissemination to promote continental development (African Union, 2020). Implementing policies that prioritize open access in African journals ensures that research findings are accessible to local scholars, policymakers, and communities, enhancing both knowledge sovereignty and developmental relevance.

9.4 Regional and Continental Collaboration Policies

Policy frameworks at the regional and continental level can facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing across African countries. For instance, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and similar regional consortia can be supported through policy measures that encourage cross-border editorial collaboration, peer review exchanges, and journal indexing partnerships (Leman et al., 2021). Policies promoting regional journal networks can increase the quality, visibility, and credibility of African journals, making them more attractive to researchers and fostering continental scholarly integration.

9.5 Encouraging Epistemic Diversity through Policy

Policies should encourage the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, culturally grounded methodologies, and local languages in scholarly publications. For example, ministries of education and research councils can establish guidelines that promote methodological pluralism and support journals that publish context-specific research. Such policies help counteract the epistemic homogenization imposed by Western publication norms, ensuring that African research reflects the continent's social, cultural, and developmental realities (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019).

9.6 Intellectual Property and Knowledge Ownership Policies

Dependence on Western journals raises concerns about control and ownership of African knowledge. Policies governing intellectual property, copyright, and data sharing should ensure that African institutions and researchers retain ownership rights over their publications and data. This can prevent intellectual extractivism, where African research is published abroad and monetized without benefiting local communities or institutions. For example, national policies could mandate that research funded by African governments or institutions remain accessible within the continent, reinforcing local knowledge sovereignty (Altbach, 2015).

9.7 Monitoring and Evaluation Policies

Finally, effective policy requires mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of African journals. Governments and research councils can establish metrics that measure local citation rates, policy uptake, and societal impact in addition to traditional international impact factors. By integrating these measures into policy frameworks, stakeholders can more accurately assess and incentivize the role of African journals in knowledge production and development, reducing the structural preference for Western outlets (Tijssen, 2007).

Policy interventions are critical levers for addressing African researchers' dependence on Western journals. By aligning institutional incentives, funding mechanisms, open-access mandates, regional collaboration, epistemic diversity, knowledge ownership, and evaluation frameworks, policymakers can create an enabling environment that supports sustainable, locally relevant scholarly publishing. Such policies are essential not only for the growth of African journals but also for strengthening knowledge sovereignty, promoting development, and enhancing Africa's voice in global scholarship.

10. Conclusion

The dependence of African researchers on Western publication journals represents a multifaceted challenge with significant implications for the sustainability of African scholarly publishing, knowledge sovereignty, and development. As this article has shown, the phenomenon is driven by structural incentives, perceptions of global

visibility, funding dynamics, and the underdevelopment of local journals, creating a cycle that prioritizes external validation over the cultivation of African scholarly ecosystems (Smart et al., 2018; Leman et al., 2021).

This dependence undermines epistemic autonomy, as researchers often adapt local studies to align with Western paradigms, marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems and context-specific methodologies (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019). The limited accessibility of Western journals further reduces the practical impact of research on African societies, as policymakers, practitioners, and local communities struggle to access knowledge that could inform education, health, agriculture, and social development initiatives (Chan et al., 2015). In essence, the reliance on Western journals contributes to both intellectual dependency and developmental detachment, weakening Africa's capacity to define, disseminate, and utilize knowledge for its own priorities.

However, this challenge also presents opportunities for strategic intervention. Strengthening African journals through investment in editorial capacity, digital infrastructure, and open-access models can enhance their credibility, visibility, and sustainability (Nwagwu, 2013; Nabyonga-Orem et al., 2020). Institutional policies that reward publication in reputable local journals, coupled with regional and continental collaboration, can incentivize researchers to contribute to African knowledge ecosystems. Furthermore, policies promoting epistemic diversity, indigenous knowledge, and contextually relevant research ensure that African scholarship maintains its cultural and developmental integrity (Connell, 2014).

Examples from initiatives like African Journals Online (AJOL) and Pan African Medical Journal demonstrate that when African journals receive institutional, governmental, and continental support, they can attract high-quality submissions, improve knowledge circulation, and influence local development outcomes. For instance, research on community health interventions in Cameroon or indigenous agricultural practices in Kenya, when published locally, can directly inform policy and practice in ways that global journals often cannot.

In conclusion, addressing African researchers' reliance on Western journals is not simply a matter of academic preference—it is a strategic imperative for knowledge sovereignty, development, and the sustainability of African scholarly publishing. A coordinated approach involving institutional reform, funding support, technological investment, policy realignment, and cultural valorisation of local scholarship can gradually redress existing imbalances. Reclaiming ownership of research production and dissemination, African scholars and institutions can ensure that the continent's intellectual capital is harnessed for both local and global impact. The sustainability of African scholarly publishing ultimately hinges on creating a system in which African knowledge is both generated and circulated on Africa's own terms, bridging the gap between research, development, and societal transformation.

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Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares that there are no financial, institutional, personal, or professional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the design, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of this study titled "African Researchers' Dependence on Western Publication Journals over African Journals: Implications for the Sustainability of African Scholarly Publishing."

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and are presented for scholarly and academic purposes. The author(s) further declare that no external funding agency, commercial organisation, or publishing body influenced the outcome, arguments, or conclusions of the study.

Where the article discusses African scholarly publishing systems and journal ecosystems, the analysis is undertaken objectively and critically in the interest of advancing knowledge production, academic sustainability, and equitable global scholarship. The author affirm adherence to accepted ethical standards in research and academic publishing.

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Tani Emmanuel Lukong is a Professor of Psychology of Learning Science and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Cameroon. His scholarship is deeply committed to advancing African-centred research traditions and repositioning African epistemologies within global academic discourse. Through his work, he critically examines the dominance of Western psychological paradigms and advocates for the recognition of African indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate and foundational sources of scientific inquiry. His research particularly focuses on Africentric psychology, learning sciences, indigenous knowledge systems, and early childhood education in Africa. He is the author of influential scholarly works, including; African Psychology: An Endogenous Lifespan Development, Africentric Epistemological Orientations to Learning, and Foundations of Learning: Psychology and Pedagogy in African Early Childhood Education. He has also published extensively in peer-reviewed international journals and developed the "Theory of African Socialisation and Emotion Regulation Adjustment"

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