

# **A Qualitative Study on Visibility of African Journals: A Case for Kenya**

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## **Research Protocol**

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## **Abbreviations**

APHRC – African Population and Health Research Center

COPE - Community on Publication Ethics

DOAJ - Directory of Open Access

ESRC – Ethics and Scientific Review Committee

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GS - Google Scholar

IDI – In depth Interviews

IF - Impact Factor

INASP - International Network for Advancing Science and Policy

ISSN - International Standard Serial Number

KII – Key Informant Interview

NOA – Non-Open Access

OA - Open Access

RA – Research Assistant

SJR - SCImago Journal & Country Rank

SNIP - Source Normalized Impact per Paper

## **Scientific Abstract**

### **Background**

Journals are the primary medium for scholarly communication among academic communities. Journal visibility helps researchers to make decisions on where to publish. Some of the visibility platforms include Google Scholar (GS) platform, Scopus platform, Open Access (OA) system, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) platform, International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) platform, International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP) platform, Web of Science (WoS) and PubMed platform. There is limited visibility of African journals which can be attributed to a number of underlying factors that affect the journal editorial practices. The factors include a lack of awareness among researchers, challenges related to access and dissemination, financial constraints, and limited access to digital platforms and technological infrastructure.

### **Methodology**

This study will employ a cross-sectional study design and the data will be collected qualitatively. In-depth interviews (IDIs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) will be conducted in Kenya. The study population will comprise the journal chief editors, representatives from African-wide journal databases/indexers, institutional repository representatives, and researchers/potential publishers. A purposive sampling technique will be utilized in identifying the study participants. Ethical approvals will be sought from relevant bodies in the country. The qualitative data from the audio-recorded interviews will be transcribed using MS Word and exported to NVivo software for analysis. The analysis will be based on pre-defined themes as well as the use of open inductive content analysis. The study will be conducted for twelve months with a budget of KSH. 4,888,320 (36,480 USD).

## **Lay Summary**

### **Background**

Journals are the means through which the communication of research findings is made. They are used by people who make decisions to determine whom to fund and beneficial is the research that has been done. A journal having high scores indicates that the journal is cited by many authors in addition to meeting the requirements for being ranked by journal databases and indexers. Journal visibility helps researchers to make decisions on where to publish. Some of the platforms that make a journal to be seen and known include Google Scholar (GS) platform, Scopus platform, Open Access (OA) system, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) platform, International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) platform, International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP) platform, Web of Science (WoS) platform and PubMed platform. Few African journals can be seen internationally, and this can be attributed to a number of factors that affect the components considered during publishing. The factors include a lack of awareness among researchers, challenges related to access and giving out the results, lack of finances, and little access to platforms that make a journal seen/known and technological infrastructure.

### **Methodology**

The factors that may cause the journals not to be seen internationally, will be studied at the same time as the impact. Questions will be asked in a general way to get more information from the respondents. Both one-on-one interviews, interviews with those people who have a good understanding of the journals and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) will be conducted in Kenya. The study population will include the head of the journal editorial board, representatives from African-wide journal databases/indexers, institutional repository (where the journals are hosted) representatives, and authors/researchers/publishers indenting to publish from Kenya. Respondents will be chosen to get a representation from each category. The go-ahead to carry out the study will be sought from relevant bodies within the country. The data from the audio-recorded interviews will be converted to Word documents and exported to a computer that will be used for analysis. For virtual interviews, the Zoom documents will also be downloaded as additional data that will be converted to Word documents. The analysis will be based on pre-defined topics as well as getting the topics as the analysis continues. The study will be conducted for twelve months with a budget of KSH. 4,888,320 (36,480 USD).

## 1. Background

The primary medium for scholarly communication among academic communities is journals (1). An academic journal is a periodical publication in which scholarship relating to a particular academic discipline is published (2). Journals serve as transparent and permanent platforms for the presentation of research discussions (3). They are the most important channel for disseminating and accrediting research in the past three hundred years (4). With regard to issues like "public access to research," "open science," "digitization in scholarly publishing technologies," and "assessment of research and its impact," the journal hopes to serve as a forum for disparate stakeholders (5). Published journal articles are used by policymakers to determine funding, priorities, and other similar purposes, as well as to measure the effectiveness of the research system, they must keep an eye on the quality of journals (6). A high impact factor indicates that the journal is frequently cited by researchers in addition to meeting the requirements for index inclusion thus becoming more visible (7).

Researchers make decisions on where to publish depending on the journal's visibility. The visibility of the journal refers to how easily researchers can find it online and how well it ranks among other journals helps in increasing visibility because researchers always go for the best-ranked journals (8). The visibility of journals is about where the researchers are publishing and who is citing their work (9). The African researchers therefore tend to publish their work abroad rather than in African journals, a trend that makes the journal to invisible. Various platforms/systems have been set up to increase journal access and visibility. They include Google Scholar (GS) platform, Scopus platform, Open Access (OA) system, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) platform, International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) platform, International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP) platform, Web of Science (WoS) platform and PubMed platform.

Nowadays most journals are accessed online, and the scientific community has a way of accessing literature e.g. For Thomson Reuters, a Canadian multinational conglomerate, journal impact factors indicate that the journals have undergone evaluation by their specialists and satisfy their requirements to be included in the citation indices (7). These requirements include having sufficient articles for the journal, publishing the articles on schedule, and having the journal's submissions peer-reviewed (7). The visibility of a journal is important for a variety of reasons to a wide range of stakeholders, including researchers, editors, and policymakers (10). To maximize research impact, researchers should know where to publish their work and what to read to stay current on developments in their fields while working under time constraints. Librarians want to maintain access to the most reputable journals while staying within their means (11). The relative performance of the journal compared to rival journals brings the curiosity of editors.

Worldwide, only 31 countries produce 97.5% of the world's most-cited journal articles (12). Research output is dominated by the global north and there is limited inclusion of global south scholarly journal databases (13). In terms of scholarly journal output, low- and middle-income nations have historically trailed behind high-income nations (14). Within Africa, the growth in the number of universities has shown a need to disseminate their research, and journals are the most preferred medium (15).

Africa has the lowest researcher density globally with less than 200 researchers per population of one million which translates to reduced scholarly journal outputs (16). Among the African countries, South Africa is leading with the proportion of scholarly journal outputs (26%) followed by Egypt at (21%) according to an analysis performed between 2000-2015 (17). Kenya contributes to only 4% of the scholarly journal outputs in Africa as per the analysis (17)

African researchers are under-represented as the first and last author positions in papers published from research done in Africa (18). The cost of publishing in open access in high-impact journals is very high (19). African researchers usually ask for waivers or publish in non-open access platforms or depend on their Global North University open access subscriptions (20). However, many African authors offer free services to leading journals as article reviewers.

An early descriptive study on the visibility of African journals showed that journal open access status (OA), Journal listing on International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), and journal publisher's membership of the Community on Publication Ethics (COPE) were significant predictors of journals visibility on Google Scholar and Scopus. There are a number of underlying factors that affect editorial practices that determine the visibility of African journals on international platforms which include: lack of awareness, challenges related to journal access and dissemination, financial constraints, inaccessibility to digital platforms, and technological infrastructure. The study further established that Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Mozambique present a unique case on the visibility of African journals. Despite a lot of efforts that have been undertaken by the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia, there is still low visibility of Ethiopian journals on international platforms. Nigeria has a lot of institutions and a lot of journals that are not very visible. Kenya institutions have several journals that are only hosted on institutional websites which are not up to the standards that can be found by indexers crawlers such as Google Scholar. Mozambique has several journals that accept Portuguese manuscripts, and the journals are not visible on international platforms as well.

Evaluation of scholarly and scientific journals in Africa is a topic of policy discussion and of particular importance. The fact that government funding is provided to higher education institutions in some African countries for their research endeavors makes the issue crucial. The amount of funding these institutions/organizations receive is based on how many publications are published. This study therefore aims to explore the underlying factors that affect editorial practices that determine the visibility of African journals on international platforms.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The visibility of African journals is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. Despite the significant contributions made by African researchers and scholars, there is a persistent lack of global recognition and visibility for the journals published in Africa. This lack of recognition and visibility not only hampers the dissemination of valuable research findings but also hinders the development and progress of African academia as well as decolonizing education.

The problem of limited visibility of African journals can be attributed to various factors. There is a lack of awareness among researchers, academics, and institutions outside of Africa regarding the quality and significance of research published in African journals (21). This leads to a bias toward journals from more established and recognized regions, resulting in a limited readership and impact on African research. The limited visibility of African journals can be

attributed to challenges related to access and dissemination. Many African journals face financial constraints, making it difficult for them to invest in effective marketing and promotion strategies (22). Additionally, limited access to digital platforms and technological infrastructure further exacerbates the visibility problem, as it restricts the reach of African journals to a global audience. Moreover, the lack of indexing in well-known international databases and repositories also contributes to the low visibility of African journals. Indexing plays a crucial role in increasing the discoverability of journals, and the absence of African journals from these databases significantly hampers their visibility and recognition. The visibility problem of African journals has serious implications for the growth and development of African academia. It hinders collaboration opportunities, limits access to diverse perspectives, and restricts the recognition and career advancement of African researchers and scholars.

INASP is supporting peer-reviewed journals in Africa to publish their journals online, making them visible as well as improving the visibility of researchers (32). Currently, Research4Life is working towards improved visibility of African journals by providing African institutions with online access to academic and professional peer-reviewed journal content (23). A practice that makes African journals that are not open-access to be visible.

A qualitative study is needed to explore the underlying factors that affect editorial practices that determine the visibility of African journals on international platforms. By understanding the barriers, challenges, and opportunities, this study aims to provide insights and recommendations to improve editorial practices and thus visibility and recognition of African journals. The findings of this study will help inform policies, strategies, and collaborations at national, regional, and international levels to improve journals' editorial practices and contribute to the overall advancement of global knowledge.

### **3. Review of literature**

A researcher deciding on where to publish not only contributes to the visibility of journals but the researchers' visibility as well (9). There are underlying factors that affect the journal visibility which then determines the journal metrics. A higher journal metrics make the journal more visible to researchers and therefore receive more publications.

#### **Journal Metrics**

Journal metrics are often used to rank journals based on their importance which gives room for comparison. The journal metrics include Impact Factor (Clarivate), CiteScore (Elsevier), Eigenfactor, Google Scholar Metrics, SCImago journal & Country Rank (SJR), and Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP).

Impact factor (IF) (a journal metric by Clarivate) is used to calculate how important a journal is compared to others in the same discipline and to find out the frequency of citations over a given time (24). High IFs will go to journals that publish Articles that receive more citations. These journals are perceived to be more significant than lower IF journals. Journal IF is a reflection of the journals' and editors' capacity to attract the greatest manuscripts (26). The likelihood that someone will cite your work could be a determining factor when choosing which journal to publish in and this can be determined using certain bibliometric indicators such as IFs (9). The indicators examine the past citation

trends for journals (27). However, some papers are never cited, even in highly influential journals, and past journal performance may not predict future citations (9). Despite the journal IFs increasing the visibility of journals, it has been greatly criticized with respect to their validity as performance measures and their potentially negative impact on the research system (28).

CiteScore is a comprehensive open metric for journal citation used by the Scopus database. The CiteScore calculates the average number of citations received in a calendar year by the number of items published by the journal in the previous three years (29). Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) metric ranks journals by attempting to account for the number of citations received by a journal and also the importance of the journals from which the citations originated (30). The metrics use Scopus data. Top-ranked journals are perceived to be more visible compared to the journals poorly ranked or not ranked at all. The Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP) value is calculated by Leiden University's Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) and is based on Scopus data. The SNIP value measures the average citation impact of the publications of a journal and corrects for the differences in citation patterns between fields (not taken into account by the Journal Impact Factor) (31). The impact of a single citation is given a higher value in subject areas where citations are less likely, and a lower value in subject areas where citations are more likely (31).

Google Scholar provides a journal ranking on the h5-median and the h5-index based on the number of citations that papers receive (32). These metrics are free rankings that are generated automatically by Google though the citations may not be as well curated as compared to other metrics databases (32). The advantage of Google Scholar is that it usually has data for journals that are not in other databases (32). Eigenfactor uses network analysis to develop methods for evaluating the influence of scholarly journals, helping researchers access literature and academic research mapping (33). The metric contributes to the journal's visibility.

### **Factors that affect the Visibility of African Journals on International platforms**

Some of the factors that affect the visibility of journals on international platforms include Journal OA status, journal listing in DOAJ, journal listing on the ISSN portal, journal publishers' COPE membership, and journal listing on the INASP platform.

Journal hosting in OA repositories increases their visibility (34). Once the journal becomes more visible, it has a greater chance of receiving publications (10). OA journals tend to have a high impact factor compared to NOA journals (34). Publishing in OA journals is associated with an 18% increase in citations, however, self-archiving increases citations by 33% which is more than publishing in OA journals (35).

DOAJ makes OA journals accessible by indexing and implementing peer review processes globally (36). This database is a useful resource when searching well-vetted and trustworthy OA journals especially when they have DOAJ seals (36). DOAJ lists only OA journals that have completed a sufficient quality assurance process, searching for a journal's name there can also aid in the identification of predatory journals (36). The platform aims to raise the visibility and reputation of OA journals across the world (37).

The ISSN for journals helps distinguish between serials with similar titles and is used in cataloguing, and ordering serial literature which is key in making journals visible (38).

COPE supports and educates publishers and editors by providing resources on publication ethics which makes the journal attract the best manuscripts (26). A journal's membership to COPE conveys to authors, reviewers, and readers that it adheres to the recommended core practices for the highest ethical standards in research publishing (39).

The INASP platform supports peer-reviewed journals from developing and emerging countries to publish their journals online, making them visible as well as improving the visibility of researchers (40).

### **Underlying factors that affect editorial practices of the African journals**

Journal editorial practices affect the visibility of African journals on international platforms. The underlying factors that affect editorial practices that determine the visibility of African journals on international platforms include a lack of awareness of existing platforms for journal visibility, challenges related to access and dissemination, financial constraints, and inadequate digital platforms and technological infrastructure.

Awareness of existing platforms for the visibility of the journals is key since the journals' publishers will aim towards meeting the platform standards (41). Even though researchers in general understand the benefits of OA, different scholars in different disciplines understand it differently in terms of the motivation of publishing in them (42).

There are a lot of problems and innovations specific to the African continent and the operational environment for disseminating scholarly journal output is disabling (43). This makes the journals not to be visible on international platforms. Most African journals are not included in the tools that enhance journal visibility due to a lack of financial resources and lack of motivation and skills (44). Infrastructure in terms of information technology, agility of platforms, connectivity of the internet, and poor institutional governance hampers OA publishing in Africa (45).

Apart from editorial practices, social research networks such as ResearchGate, Google Scholar Citation, and Academia.edu can help in increasing the visibility of African journals (46). Additionally, the visibility of African journals can be increased by academic profile platforms such as Scopus author ID, Publons, ORCID, and Kudos (46).

The visibility of journals originates from factors affecting editorial practices. Effectively addressing the journal editorial practices will determine the visibility of the journals on platforms that enhance journal visibility. With improved visibility, their metrics will also improve since they are likely to receive more publications. Improving the visibility of African journals not only improves the journal metrics but also the visibility of researchers. This study therefore aims to explore the underlying factors that affect editorial practices that determine the visibility of African journals on international platforms.

## **4. Research Objectives**

### **General research objective**

To assess the visibility of African journals from, articles review and inclusion in major platforms and indexers

## Specific Objectives

1. Explore existing editorial practices among African journals.
2. Explore underlying factors affecting the editorial practices of the African journals.
3. Understand the inclusion and exclusion criteria employed by major journal repositories and indexers to either list or not list African journals.
4. Characterize the submissions received by African journals listed vs not listed.
5. Understand the views and preferences for authors' choice of journals for publication.

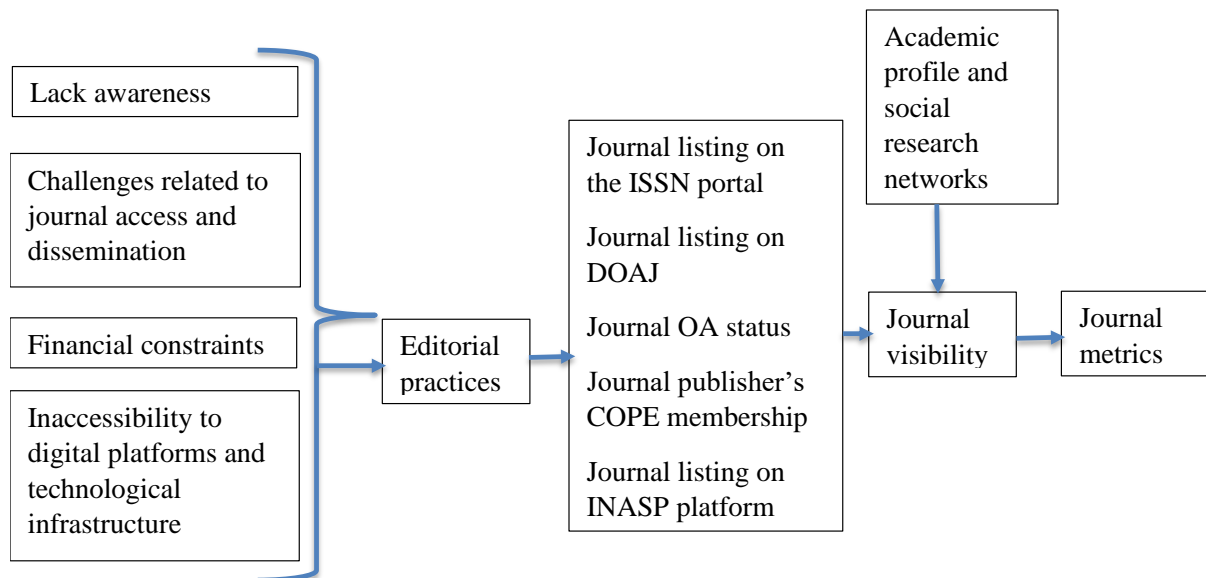
## 5. Research questions

1. What are the existing editorial practices among African journals?
2. What are the underlying factors affecting the editorial practices of African journals?
3. What are the inclusion and exclusion criteria employed by major journal repositories and indexers to either list or not list African journals?
4. What are the characteristics of the submissions received by African journals listed vs not listed in major journal repositories and indexers?
5. What are the views and preferences for authors' choice of journals for publication?

## 6. Conceptual framework and operationalization

A synthesis of the above existing literature on the visibility of African journals yielded a conceptual framework presented in *Figure 1* below.

**Figure 1: A conceptual framework of underlying editorial practices that affect the visibility of African journals**



## **7. Methodology**

### **7.1. Study design and sampling strategy**

#### **Study design**

This study will be a cross-sectional qualitative study. The IDIs and KIIs will be conducted with journal chief editors, African-wide journal databases/indexers (Representatives based in Kenya), institutional repositories, institutional heads of research from Kenya, and authors/researchers/potential publishers from Kenya. One set of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) will be conducted with various journal chief editors from Kenya to further explore the whole spectrum of African journal visibility. The second set of FGDs will be conducted with authors/researchers/potential publishers to understand their views, preferences, and what informs their choice of journals for publication. The third set of FGD will be conducted with Kenyan institutional repositories to further explore views on African journals visibility.

The study findings will be synthesized to generate integrated findings on the experiences that improve the visibility of African journals.

#### **Sampling strategy**

This study will be conducted in Kenya. An initial meeting will be held between investigators from APHRC and representatives from the country to discuss the project goals, and timelines, determine stakeholders, and focal persons, and settle on the study participants. The inception meeting will also aim to solicit ‘buy-in’ engagement and commitment to the project.

Official communication on the project and introduction of study details, including the approaches and timelines, will thereafter be sent to respective institutions, through the project focal persons. Subsequent communication on the progress of the project upon completion of data collection will be communicated to the relevant stakeholders through the focal persons. A final stakeholder engagement meeting will be held to validate the findings.

#### **Study population**

The study population will comprise the following:

1. Journal chief editors from Kenya
2. Representatives from African-wide journal databases/indexers(s) (Representatives in Kenya).
3. Representatives from Kenyan institutional repositories
4. Authors/Researchers/potential publishers from Kenya
5. Institutional heads of research from Kenya

#### **Study location**

This study will be carried out in Kenyan universities and research institutions across the country.

#### **Sampling**

The study will utilize a purposive sampling technique and will target African journal editors, African-wide journal databases/indexers (Representatives in Kenya), institutional repositories, journal chief editors, and researchers/authors/potential publishers, institutional heads of research from Kenya. Purposive sampling will be utilized to ensure equal representation of the study participants based on the thematic areas (Humanities, social sciences, health sciences, etc). This will ensure the generalisability of the research findings across all thematic areas. An

initial search done on Kenyan journals found 120 journals hosted by universities and research institutions. This total number will generate enough sample size for our study.

Purposive sampling will be used to recruit thirty journal editors for the study. Twenty representatives from institutional repositories will be included in the study. Thirty authors/researchers/potential publishers will be selected purposively, and ten institutional heads of research. Two representatives from African-wide databases/indexers (Representatives in Kenya) will also be included in the study.

### **Inclusion criteria**

- Kenyan journal chief editors
- Representatives of Kenyan institutional repositories.
- African-wide journal databases/indexers (Representatives in Kenya).
- Kenyan researchers/authors/potential publishers
- Institutional heads of research from Kenya

## **7.2. Data collection methods**

### **KIIs and IDIs**

KIIs/IDIs with the journal chief editors, representatives from institutional repositories, and representatives from journal databases/indexers will seek to explore existing editorial practices among African journals, explore underlying factors affecting African journal editorial practices, understand the inclusion and exclusion criteria employed by major journal repositories and indexers to either list or not list African journals, and characterize the submissions received by African journals listed vs not listed. IDIs with authors/researchers/potential publishers will seek to understand the views and preferences for authors' choice of journals for publication.

Twenty KIIs will be conducted with representatives from institutional repositories, ten with institutional heads of research, and two KIIs with African-wide databases/indexers (Representatives in Kenya). Thirty IDIs will be conducted with authors/researchers/potential publishers and also thirty will be conducted with Kenyan journals' chief editors.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

Three FGDs will be conducted in the country. The first FGD will be conducted with the Kenyan journals' chief editors, the second one with representatives from institutional repositories, and the third one will be conducted with authors/researchers/potential publishers from Kenya. FGDs will proceed after IDIs and KIIs to further explore the themes. Each FGD will constitute 12 purposively selected participants who may or may have not participated in the IDIs. A qualitative researcher will moderate the discussions. The focus of the FGDs will be to identify common practices, as well as explore the group's different views in terms of experiences and worldviews of African journal visibility. This will help identify common themes as well as diversity in the experience of participants. FGD guide questions will be informed by the preliminary analysis of IDIs and KIIs. *Table 1* below summarizes the methodology that we will use to achieve our study objectives.

### **Table 1: Study Methodology**

Objective	Methodology	Study participants
Explore existing editorial practices among African journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IDIs</li> <li>● KIIs</li> <li>● FGDs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kenyan journal chief editors</li> <li>● Representatives from institutional repositories.</li> <li>● Representatives from African-wide journal databases/indexers (Representatives in Kenya).</li> <li>● Institutional heads of research</li> </ul>
Explore underlying factors affecting the editorial practices of African journals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IDIs</li> <li>● KIIs</li> <li>● FGDs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kenyan journal chief editors</li> <li>● Representatives from institutional repositories</li> <li>● Representatives from African-wide journal databases/indexers (Representatives in Kenya).</li> <li>● Institutional heads of research</li> </ul>
Understand the inclusion and exclusion criteria employed by major journal repositories and indexers to either list or not list African journals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IDIs</li> <li>● KIIs</li> <li>● FGDs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kenyan journal chief editors</li> <li>● Representatives from institutional repositories</li> <li>● Representatives from African-wide journal databases/indexers (Representatives in Kenya).</li> <li>● Institutional heads of research</li> </ul>
Characterize the submissions received by African journals listed vs not listed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IDIs</li> <li>● KIIs</li> <li>● FGDs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kenyan journal chief editors</li> <li>● Representatives from institutional repositories</li> <li>● Representatives from African-wide journal databases/indexers (Representatives in Kenya).</li> <li>● Institutional heads of research</li> </ul>
Understand the views and preferences for authors' choice of journals for publication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IDIs</li> <li>● FGDs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Authors/Researchers/potential publishers</li> </ul>

### Training a research assistant and piloting

Five research assistants (RAs) holders of at least a bachelor's degree in a science-related program will be recruited by APHRC. The project team will take them through a two-day training on the study objectives, qualitative data collection techniques, and research ethics. They will be trained in moderating, listening, tape recording, and notetaking, without displaying any judgmental attitude towards the participants or the information being received. The RAs will participate in pre-testing the study tools and refining the final versions of the

tools. The training will include focused sessions and exercises regarding the meaning and process of informed consent, the importance of protecting the privacy of subjects, and the confidentiality of the information obtained from them.

### **Managing data quality during fieldwork**

A research officer based at APHRC (PA) will supervise the data collection exercise. He will be responsible for verifying audio before approving for transcription and data entry.

## **7.3. Ethical considerations**

### **Ethical Training Certification and Clearance**

Members of the study team will undergo ethical training for researchers and have valid certification. Furthermore, the protocol will be reviewed by APHRC's internal scientific review committee before submission to the Amref Ethics and Scientific Research Committee (ESRC).

### **Informed Consent**

Potential study participants will be provided with written and oral information about the study before any consent to participate is sought from them. Specifically, they will be adequately informed about the purpose of the study and the methods to be used. In addition, they will be informed about the institutional affiliation of the researchers; anticipated benefits and potential risks and follow-up of the study; discomfort it may entail; the right to choose to participate or not participate in the study, or to withdraw consent to participate at any time, without any reprisal whatsoever; and measures are taken to ensure confidentiality of information they provide. The respondents will thereafter be asked to sign the consent forms before the start of data collection. A copy of the informed consent form is attached in *Appendix 1*. For online meetings, there will be oral consenting as well as participants signing the consent forms before the start of data collection.

### **Telephone Database**

The potential study participants will receive explanations about the telephone database component, and the functionalities it needs to support, which includes, storing phone numbers, names, addresses, and other relevant information. There will be explanations about the operations that will be supported by the telephone database such as adding, updating, deleting, and querying entries.

### **Benefits**

No immediate tangible benefit is likely to accrue to the participants through their participation in this study and this will be explained to them when obtaining their informed consent. However, the potential benefit of their participation is the improvement in the visibility of African journals. They will therefore be made fully aware that the data gathered will be used to provide recommendations to the Ministry of Education, library associations, journal editors, and institutional repositories.

### **Confidentiality**

The results from the study will be anonymized at all points of presentation or data sharing. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times through training of the RA on the meaning of confidentiality and mechanisms that maintain confidentiality during and after data collection. All data collection instruments will be kept under lock and key at all times in the field and in study offices and will only be accessible to members of the study team. Additionally, data will be stored in password-protected computers, accessible only by the members of the study team. Results will be presented in reports in an aggregated manner such that responses cannot be traced back to individual participants.

### **Risks and risk management**

There may be limited potential risks involved with conducting this study. Participants will be asked a number of questions relating to the visibility of African journals. Careful and deliberate steps will be taken to ensure that participants and other stakeholders are comfortable. The study tools will be pre-tested among a small group of participants with similar characteristics as the study population to identify potential negative consequences that may necessitate the modification of the study tools.

#### **7.4. Data processing and analysis**

Qualitative data from audio-recorded IDIs, KIIs, and FGDs will be transcribed using MS Word and imported into the QSR NVivo 10 program. As the research is primarily exploratory, we will use predefined themes as well as open inductive content analysis to come up with codes for the analysis of qualitative data. The data will first be anonymized before analysis. Using Nvivo software, qualitative data will be organized in the emergent thematic areas. We shall conduct thematic data analysis in qualitative meta-synthesis. The analysis will be done per the study objectives.

#### **7.5. Stakeholder engagement plan**

Initial meetings will be organized with different stakeholders to discuss data collection plans, have buy-in in the study, and the study participants. These meetings will be both physical and virtual.

#### **7.6. Study limitations and risks**

The study aims to generate evidence on the status of the visibility of African journals. In addition, the study aims to make recommendations on the current state of African journals. Therefore, the study requires buy-in from the journal editors, journal repositories, and journal indexers; a lack of which will introduce certain risks to the study.

The study team may encounter some risks and challenges that may include a lack of buy-in from the journal indexers and journal repositories. The risks will be mitigated by carrying out an inception meeting that will enable the heads of repositories and journal indexers to understand the aim of the study.

The study may encounter a failure by respondents to provide reliable information. To mitigate this risk, the RAs will provide a brief on the aims of the study and the importance of the study to the respondents. Finally, the risk of the subjectivity of data will be mitigated by training the RAs before data collection and having a research officer from APHRC supervising the data collection process.

### **7.7. Plan for communicating findings of the study**

There will be physical dissemination activities with different stakeholders. A technical paper containing methodological approaches, and recommendations will be published and widely disseminated. The study findings will be communicated to the different government officials for possible policy change and practice on African journals' visibility as will be informed by the study results. There will be recommendations on sustainable interventions to improve the journals' visibility.

## **8. Management and organization of the study**

### **Research team**

**Dr. Marta Vicente-Crespo (co-investigator)** is the unit head of the R&D Ecosystem Strengthening unit at APHRC. She will guide the quantitative collection and provide scientific input in the project. She will also play an oversight role during the high-level stakeholder engagement and validation meetings as well as refining research questions.

**Dr. Julius Sindi (co-investigator)** is the catalyze program manager at APHRC. He will lead high-level stakeholder engagements for adapting and co-designing the proposed methodologies and validation of findings. He will lead the implementation and provide approvals for the project expenses.

**Dr. Emmy Igonya (Co-investigator)** is a qualitative researcher and a research scientist working in the research division at APHRC. She will provide guidance on the data collection phase of the study, conceptualizing and designing the study.

**Ms Leah Mwangi (Co-investigator)** is a research officer within the Research Capacity Strengthening Division at APHRC. She will participate in sampling and identification of participants, conduct the scoping review, and take part in scientific writing and dissemination of the research findings.

**Mr. Patrick Amboka (Co-investigator)** is a research officer within the Research Capacity Strengthening Division at APHRC. He will support the project manager in executing project activities such as coordinating the stakeholder engagement and validation workshops, development of final study tools, training RAs, ethics, and research permit applications. He will take lead in sampling and identification of participants. He will take part in scientific writing and dissemination of the research findings.



### Timeline of activities

Research activity	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
Month	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Virtual Inception meetings between: APHRC research team and African journal repositories and journal indexer									
Correspondence to participating journal editors, and introduction to the objectives of the study									
Development and validation of data collection tools									
Training of the RA									
Data collection: IDIs, KIIs and FGDs									
Data analysis									
Data documentation									
Report writing									
Workshop/ meeting for dissemination of findings									
Draft manuscript to peer-reviewed journal									

## Budget

Item	Unit	Pax	Days	Cost per day/Unit (USD)	Total (USD)
<b>Inception meeting</b>					
Conference package	1	20	2	40	1,600
Local travel allowance for participants based in Kenya	1	20	1	60	1,200
<b>Sub Total 1</b>					<b>2,800</b>
<b>Research Permits</b>					
Annual Ethical Clearance	1	1	1	1,000	1,000
<b>Sub Total 2</b>					<b>1,000</b>
<b>Training and Data Collection</b>					
Internet bundles for training of data collectors for 2 days	4	5	2	50	2,000
Wages for data collectors for 45 days	4	2	30	30	7,200
Communication allowance for FIs per month	4	2	2	30	480
Transcribers for 15 days	4	4	15	30	7,200

Data review and report writing workshops in Nairobi for 5 days	1	6	5	50	1,500
Data documentation	4	2	15	30	3,600
<b>Sub Total 3</b>					<b>21,980</b>
<b>Validation meeting in Kenya</b>					
Conference package	1	25	2	50	2,500
Local travel allowance for participants based in Kenya	1	20	2	60	2,400
<b>Sub Total 4</b>					<b>4,900</b>
<b>Equipment</b>					
Purchase of recorders	4	2	1	350	2,800
<b>Sub-Total 5</b>					<b>2,800</b>
<b>Publication</b>					
Publication fees	1	1	1	3,000	3,000
<b>Sub-Total 6</b>					<b>3,000</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>					<b>36,480</b>

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## **Sample Questionnaire**

### **Understanding the views and preferences for authors' choice of journals for publication**

1. What factors do authors consider most important when selecting a journal for publication?
2. How do authors prioritize between factors such as journal reputation, impact factor, publication speed, and open access policies?
3. Are there any specific characteristics of journals that authors from different disciplines or regions prefer?

4. What role do considerations like journal scope, audience reach, and indexing services play in authors' decisions?

What is the author's view about the role of African journals? Should they focus on publishing research from or about Africa? Should they aim at including global research?

5. What is a prestigious journal for you? Is there a role to play by niche journals that publish on specific geographies or topics? How do authors perceive the importance of publishing in prestigious versus niche journals?

6. What influences authors' perceptions of a journal's credibility and trustworthiness?