Webinar on "What you need to know before publishing", organised by Africa Online & Publications Library

Online on Zoom, October 23, 2021

Acknowledgements

This report is based on an October 23rd, 2021, webinar–what you need to know before publishing–organised by Africa Online & Publications Library (AOPL). The webinar brought together undergraduate and postgraduate students around the world who are interested in academic research. Special thanks to our Programmes Officer Cynthia Nge Adanze who moderated the webinar. Currently pursuing a PhD in Public Health at Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, Turkey, Adanze is known for her works with She Decides and as a Public Health Specialist with the Integrated Health Organisation (IHO). Chengkuac Awan, Amanda Ellen Nicola Jojo, David Jitzi, Tata Comfort, Dr. Budi Reymond Njingti, Shei Louisa Linwe, Ngani Faith and Nfor Ngenge Leonora Ndfubu did a marvellous job by planning and coordinating the webinar. Sincere thanks to our invited speakers from the U.S.A. and Turkey in the persons of Enuh Blaise Manga and Fichanfie Dj Nkwain, all those who registered for the webinar and the nearly 30 attendees who actively participated in the intensive 3-hour discussions. This report was prepared by Ngenge Ransom Tanyu with valuable contributions from Enuh Blaise Manga and Fichanfie Dj Nkwain, Cynthia Nge Adanze, Chengkuac Awan, Amanda Ellen Nicola Jojo and Dr Reymond Budi Njingti. Thanks to the webinar attendees for allowing us to take photos that have been incorporated in this report. The PowerPoint presentations of our key speakers have also been integrated into this report.

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1. Conference organiser

The Webinar was organised by the Africa Online & Publications Library (AOPL).

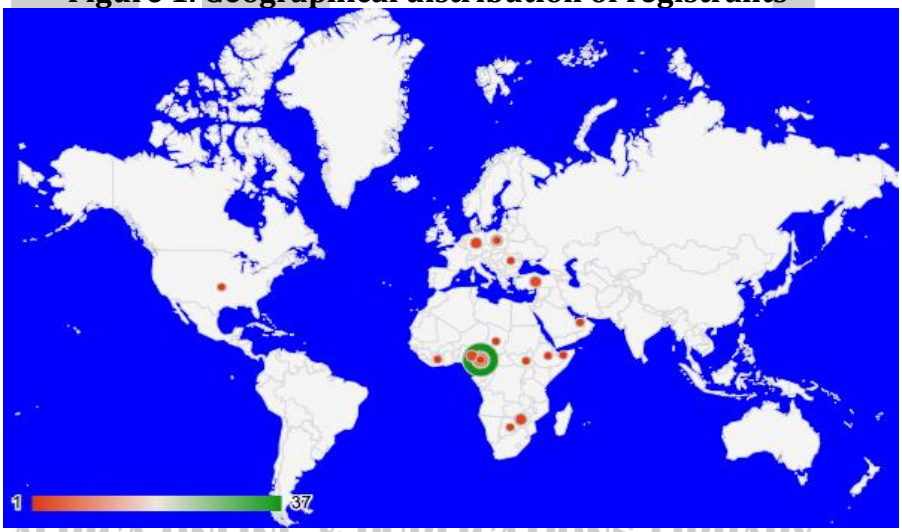
2. Webinar format

The Webinar was conducted online via Zoom conferencing. The 3-hour webinar-initially planned for 2 hours-had 2 speakers from the AOPL and 2 invited speakers. The first three speakers gave a 15-minute presentation each, followed by 5-10 minutes for questions and answers. The webinar rounded off with a 10-minute presentation from AOPL's public relations officer and a closing remark from the moderator.

3. Geographical distribution of registrants

A total of 50 students registered from Cameroon, 3 from Turkey, 1 from the United States of America, 4 from Zimbabwe, 3 from Nigeria, 3 from Poland, 1 from Ivory Coast, 1 from Somaliland, 1 from Chad, 3 from United Arab Emirates, 2 from Germany, 1 from South Sudan, 1 from Romania, 1 from Ethiopia, 1 from Botswana and 1 did not disclose the country of residence. The geographical distribution of those who registered for the webinar is captured on the map below.

Figure 1. Geographical distribution of registrants



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4. Names of universities

With regards to universities, 14 registered from the University of Buea, 17 from The University of Bamenda, 1 from the United Nations University for Peace, 4 from the University of Yaoundé 1, 1 from Cyprus International University, 3 from Christian College of Southern Africa Zimbabwe, 7 from Université de Dschang, 2 from Pedagogical University of Cracow, 1 from AAHCI, 1 from AGH University of Science and Technology , 1 from the University of Yaounde II, 2 from the University of South Africa, 1 from Siantou university complex, 1 from University of Hargeisa, 1 from Université Dakar Bourguiba, 1 from University Adventist Cosendai, 1 from Kogi State University, Ayingba, 1 from University of Ilorin, 2 from Eskişehir Osmangazi University, 1 from Pan Afriq Buea, 1 from Rhein waal University of Applied Sciences, 1 from University of Juba, 1 from Humboldt

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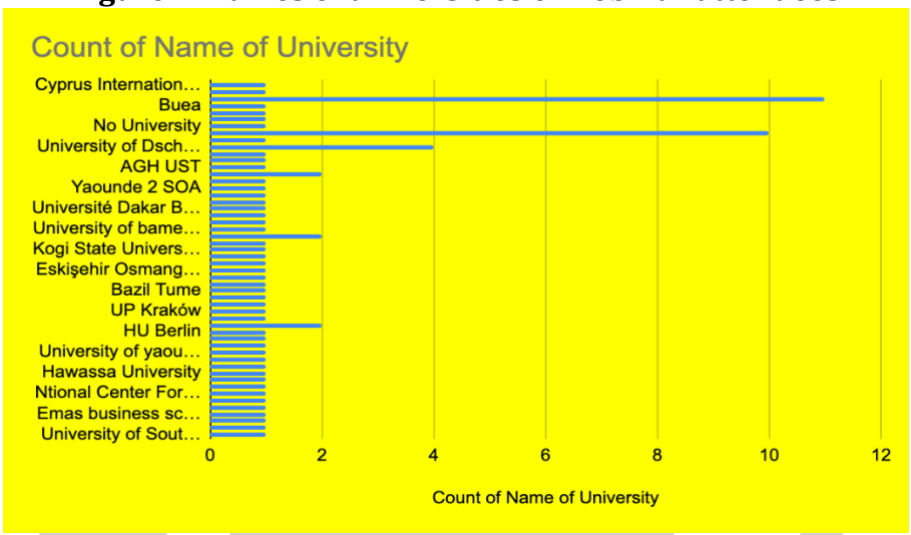
Berlin, 1 from Bamenda university of science and technology, 1 from Hawassa University, 1 from Christian College of Southern Africa, 1 from Ntional Center For Animal Husbandry, Veterinary and Halieutic Training, 1 from University of Ngaoundere, 1 from Bernadette flore Messina, 1 from Emas business school and 4 without institutional affiliations.

Figure 2. Names of universities of webinar attendees



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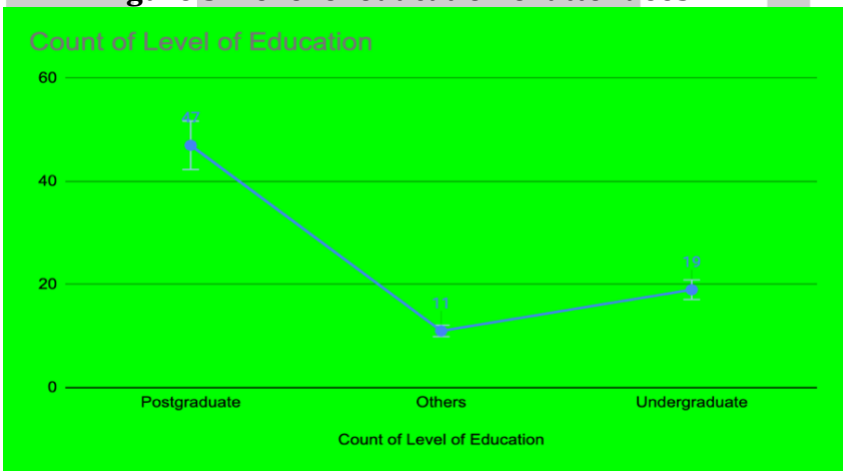
5. Level of education

With regards to the level of education, 47 out of the total number of 77 registered participants were at the postgraduate level, 19 at the undergraduate and 11 did not state their level of education. The fact that a majority of registered attendees were university students either pursing undergraduate or postgraduate students reflects the objective of the webinar to attract students especially those interested in academic research.

Figure 3: Level of education of attendees



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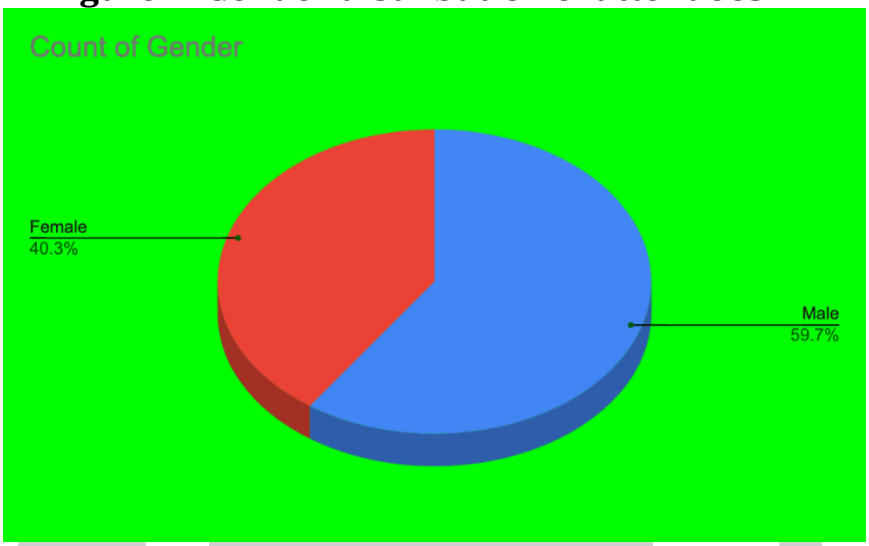
6. Gender distribution

There was no big difference in terms of men and women who attended the webinar. Whereas 59.9% of the registered participants were males, 40.3% were female which indicates an increase in both women having access to education and taking interest in research.

Figure 4. Gender distribution of attendees



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7. Number of Attendees

In total, 77 interested participants registered for the webinar. Only a fluctuating number of 30 attended 70% of the webinar and 17 registered to receive certificates of attendance.

8. Overview of the webinar

The close to 3-hours of presentation and discussions moderated by ***Cynthia Nge Adanze*** on the October 23, 2021, the webinar brought together students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels interested in academic research. The objective was twofold:

- Simplify the process of journal publications which is a key aspect of research.
- Introduce the attendees to www.africaopl.org and its services.

9. Theme of the webinar

The webinar was held under the theme "**What you need to know before publishing**" with a particular focus on the challenges facing researchers across Africa. Central themes and questions of each session included:

- Basic terms in publications.
- What is a journal and different types of journals?

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- Types of journal articles, and aim and scope, requirements and formats?
- Choosing a journal for publication (ranking and impact factor)

10. Key presentations

10.1 Session I

Session I followed an introduction of AOPL to the attendees by the founder, ***Ngenge Ransom Tanyu***. His presentation centered on the reasons why the AOPL was created, what the organisation does, its uniqueness and creativity, team, how to access their website, careers at their organistaion and ongoing projects.

AOPL is a social enterprise providing access to scholarly research for students and lecturers in universities, professional schools and vocational colleges across Africa. We pride ourselves in publishing and disseminating scholarly research digitally as part of the drive to preserve knowledge easily retrieved from anywhere on the continent.

AOPL exists because of the opportunities for future and further studies in Africa. The organisation enhances homogeneous access to knowledge, promote academic research and its cascading effects on development across the continent. AOPL is also a peer-to-peer platform where we constantly improve published materials to give you access to the most accurate knowledge. AOPL works to explore, collect, collate, archive and make accessible scholarly works to students and scholars in universities and other higher institutions of learning across the African continent and beyond. It also serves as a publishing house where students, budding scholars as well as university dons can publish and disseminate their scholarly works with greater ease, research centre purposely for research consultancy and thesis writing and review

The organisation is unique in that it finds in peculiarity in its online existence that defies boundaries of geography and economic status of its users. The materials made available on our platforms can be accessed throughout the continent by every student and scholar regardless of their geographical location as well as their economic background. It is also unique in its dual role of serving both as a repository and marketplace for scholarly works.

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10.2 Session II

The second presentation by ***Enuh Blaise Manga*** PhD(c) Biotechnology and Biosafety focused on basic terms in publications, types of journal articles, aim and scope, requirements and formats, and the different types of journals.

a. Common Jargon

Common jargon in journal publications include open access, indexing, peer-review, paper/manuscript/article/publication, journal, Editor/Editorial board, reviewer, citation, impact Factor,

quarter, licensing and rights, (Hirsch) H-index and i10-index.

b. What is a Journal

A journal is a scholarly publication containing articles written by researchers, professors and other experts. Journals focus on a specific discipline or field of study. Unlike newspapers and magazines, journals are intended for an academic or technical audience, not general readers.

c. Common types of journals

Features	Academic/Scholarly Journals	Trade Journals	Current Affairs/ Opinion Magazines	Popular Magazines	Newspapers
Purpose	To inform, report, and make available original research and new findings.	To report on industry trends, new products or techniques to people in a specific trade, business or profession.	To offer in-depth reporting and feature articles without scholarly conventions.	To entertain and inform without providing in-depth analysis.	To disseminate news on a daily or weekly basis.
Subject	Often devoted to a single discipline or subdiscipline.	Cover practical information related to a field or industry.	Cover a wide range of topics of interest to the readership. Be aware of the predominant philosophical/political stance of the editorial board.	Often focused on a particular subject or hobby but may also cover a variety of topics.	Encompass current events in politics, sport, leisure, religion and business.
Peer Review Process	Articles often reviewed by an author's peers before publication.	No peer review process.	No peer review process.	No peer review process, may be reviewed by an editor or editorial board.	No peer review process.
Access	Mainly held in libraries or on subscription-based databases - few are freely available on the WWW.	Mainly held in libraries or on subscription-based databases. Commonly available as part of professional / trade association membership.	Many titles available from major newsagents, public libraries and some university libraries.	Available in supermarkets and newsagents.	Available in newsagents.
Examples	*American Economic Review* *Australian Journal of Psychology*	*Advertising Age* *Nursing Times* *Drug Topics*	*Bulletin (Sydney)* *Current Affairs Bulletin* *Scientific American* *Time (Sydney)*	*Readers Digest* *National Geographic* *New Idea* *Sports Illustrated*	*Australian Financial Review* *Morning Bulletin* *Courier Mail*

d. Types of publishable material and publishing workflow

Publishable material can range from jump to section, book review, case report, clinical study, commentaries, conference materials, data notes, datasets, letters & short reports, posters & slides, registered reports, research article, review article and software tool articles. The figure below is a summary of how a publishing workflow looks like.

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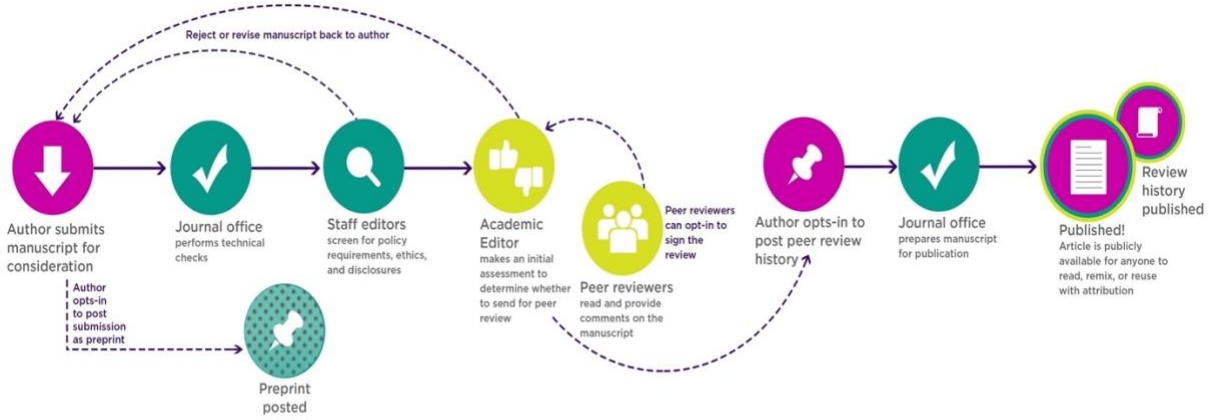
Figure 6. Typical path (example from PloS)



e. Common reasons for rejection

- *Plagiarism*: The writers have the primary responsibility for plagiarism prevention. It is critical to develop the ability to write any manuscript in one's own words and to substantiate quotes with proper references when using relevant evidence. The consequences of plagiarism could range from disciplinary charges such as retraction of the article to criminal charges.
- *Language*: One of the important limitations to publication is the problem of writing in English.

f. How to deal with rejection

- Assuming you have something publishable ready.
- Up to more than 90% rejection rate possible for some journals.
- Even Nobel prize winners get rejections.

g. Tips

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- Do not rush submitting your article for publication.
- Select an appropriate publication outlet.
- Read the aims and scope and author guidelines of your target journal carefully.
- Make a good first impression with your title and abstract.
- Have a professional editing firm copy-edit (not just proofread) your manuscript, including the main text, list of references, tables and figures.

h. **Do's:**

- Find a clinically relevant unusual phenomenon/concept in a usual entity or vice versa.
- Do a literature search on it and confirm uniqueness of your study/concept.

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- Find out which journals have published such reports/studies. Select an appropriate journal based on this knowledge.
- Plan your study/manuscript well.
- Strictly follow the instructions to author for a particular journal.
- Keep ethical issues in mind and be crisp and to the point.
- Prepare your manuscript in separate files like: Cover page, certificate from authors, Title page, Manuscript without author's details, Legends, Images/photographs/tables etc. depending on the journal's requirement.
- Keep high resolution images/photographs/graphics with appropriate annotations ready for uploading. Keep the number of images especially color images to essential ones. Remember, color images/photographs increase cost of printing significantly.
- Pay particular attention to syntax and grammar. Wrong spellings, sentence structure and grammar tend to exasperate the reviewers.
- Pay attention to the reference style, photographs/images and legends.
- Read your manuscript several times before you make it final.
- Get your manuscript critically reviewed by your colleagues before you upload it.
- Have perseverance and be persistent.

i. **Don’ts**

- Use unethical means.
- Plagiarize in any form and extent.
- Disclose patient's identity by any means.
- Loose heart at the beginning if your article is rejected or unfavorable comments are given by reviewers. Have a positive outlook for criticisms and comments by reviewers and improve your manuscript accordingly.
- Do not submit the manuscript in more than one journal at a time.

Considering all this, do I really need to publish? You may be asking yourself. Here are some few reasons:

- The act of putting your research to paper will help you clarify your goals for the research, will help you in reviewing and interpreting your own data and force you to compare your work with that of others.
- Peer review gives you important feedback on the validity of your research approach and can provide insight on next steps for advancing and interpreting your work.
- Communicating the information that you have found will help other researchers advance their work, thus building on the body of knowledge that exists in your field.
- Writing and publishing puts your research into larger context.
- Your published paper can help in the public understanding of a research question.
- Having a robust body of published works helps advance your career as you are considered for academic appointments and promotions.

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- Publishing helps establish you as an expert in your field of knowledge.
- Peer-reviewed publication provides evidence that helps in the evaluation of merit of research funding requests.

10.3 Session III

The third presentation by ***Fichanfie Dj Nkwain*** examined the various factors to consider when choosing a journal for publication.

i. Deciding to publish?

Have you collected your data and completed your paperwork? Now the next challenge "Where do you get it published? Which journal is best for your paper?" Despite the vast array of publishing opportunities in today's digital world that allow authors to reach a wider audience, authors face an unprecedented challenge when selecting a journal to publish their research. But before you send out your paper to be published, I would like to encourage you to always have it read by your colleagues, friends, professors and critiqued and consider their feedback very seriously.

ii. What to consider when choosing a specific journal

You might want to avoid predatory or pseudo-journals that accept and publish almost all submissions and charge article processing (or publication) fees, often informing authors about this after a paper's acceptance for publication. They often claim to perform peer review but do not and may purposefully use names similar to well established journals. These journals are void short of recommended procedures such as expert peer-review, editing, archiving, indexing, and they always promise almost instant publication. In considering where you want to publish, three factors must be in play:

1. Considering the policies of the journal involved

2. Understanding your own preferences and

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3. Understanding the considerations of other institutions.

A- Review the journal's policies and procedures

- What is the journal's peer-review policy? (Peer review is the process by which an academic work is evaluated by other people within the same discipline). This process helps to assess the validity, quality and originality of a research article before it is published.
- What is the submission process? When you submit, it is assigned to an editor. The editor assesses it if it falls within the scope and aim of the journal and if it is well written. The editor then decides either to reject or forward it to referees for external peer review. These independent reviews provide their expert opinion to the editor

about the manuscript submitted. The editor then decides based on these recommendations and advises the author. The author responds to the reviews before a final decision is made.

- Design and methodology of the journal (mostly qualitative, quantitative or mixed). Are you comfortable with the research methodology of the journal you are choosing?

- What is the scope of the journal? Is it multidisciplinary or specific?
- How often do they publish? Quarterly, Bi-annually, yearly etc.

B- Understand your publishing options

- When considering a journal, keep in mind that it is not a one-way decision. A journal might as well reject your paper although you have chosen it. What is therefore the main consideration of the journal's policies you have to take into account when choosing a journal so that they do not reject your paper?
- What new idea is your research contributing to already existing pool of research? What knowledge is it contributing to an existing theory or general knowledge?
- How timely is the research and what major challenges is it tackling?
- Do you want to publish your work open access? (Increase the visibility and readership of your research, freely share your work but make sure it complies with your funder's mandate if your research was funded)
- Do you want to publish your work rapidly?

C- Understanding the considerations of other institutions

- How is the journal's performance is measured?
- Which journal metrics are most relevant? Journal metrics measure the level of importance of a journal by measuring how often its articles are included in the reference lists of other productions. Different metric tools exist such as the H5 index, Scopus Journal Analyzer, Scopus citation tracker, Impact Factor.
- Is it important to publish in a journal with a good Impact Factor. Impact Factor is not associated to factors such as the quality of peer review process or the quality of the content of the journal. It is rather a measure that reflects the average number of citations to articles published in journals, books, thesis or other research works). The journal with the highest Impact Factor is the one that published the most cited articles over a 2-year period. There are different tools used in measuring the impact factor of a journal such as Journal citation report, SCImago Journal Rank, and the Source Normalized Impact per Paper.

iii. How to source for journals

- Your library's subscriptions and tools like Google Scholar to see which journals have published research on your subject area. Speak to colleagues, supervisors, and your librarian.

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- Ask from colleagues, supervisors, and your institution's librarians. Depending on who you're speaking to, you can ask a whole range of questions to help you narrow down your search. Create a list of all suggestions and include the journals' url links and learn more about them in the About tab.
- Special search platforms such as tandfonline.com https://mjl.clarivate.com/home
- Search calls for papers. Most journals remain open for general submissions year-round. But often, a journal will promote a particular theme or topic by creating a special issue and putting out a call for papers (essentially a specific ask for submissions related to the theme).

Explore journal suggester tools/directories. Several publishers have journal suggester tools that allow you to narrow down your search. This works by analyzing the article's abstract to find a shortlist of our journals that publish similar research. Such platforms include:

- https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-your-research/choosing-a-journal/journal-suggester/
- https://journalfinder.elsevier.com/
- https://journalsuggester.springer.com/
- https://journalguide.com/
- www.edanzediting.com/journal-selector
- Directory of open access journals https://doaj.org/
- Publisher tools such as Elsevier Journal Finder

Manuscript matcher is another tool that can help you make a choose a journal to publish your work.

10.4 Session IV

The fourth and last presentation by ***Amanda Ellen Nicola Jojo*** tackled the services offered by our organisation and the links to its social media.

Our services

- Our services are anchored on our theme, "Knowledge Needs Freedom."
- Library services: we offer open and free access to academic literature for students, lecturers, professional schools and vocational colleges across Africa.
- Publisher: we pride ourselves in publishing and disseminating scholarly research as part of the effort to preserve knowledge.

- Journals are published quarterly covering all academic areas which include natural sciences, social sciences and the arts with a focus on the African continent.
- Educational research centre/consultancy: conduct specialised and targeted research on behalf of a client and produce a final analysis of key findings. They are normally experts

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Conference attendees were requested to kindly sign up on our website by following the prompts below:

- Sign up with us at https://www.africaopl.org/register OR sign in with
- Sing in Google or LinkedIn https://www.africaopl.org/login
- Update your profile https://www.africaopl.org/account/profile

To connect with other AOPLIANS at our social media functionality for research and researchers on AOPL community via: https://www.africaopl.org/community

With the goal to encourage attendees with social media pages that complement our social media, handles to our social media pages were highlighted. They include:

- **Twitter;** https://twitter.com/AfricaOnlinePu1?s=08
- LinkedIn; https://www.linkedin.com/company/africa-online-publications-library
- Facebook; https://www.facebook.com/africaopl/

What's next?

- On December 4th, 2021, AOPL will be having a workshop deep-diving into how one can make a career as a researcher and most crucially how to generate income out of it.

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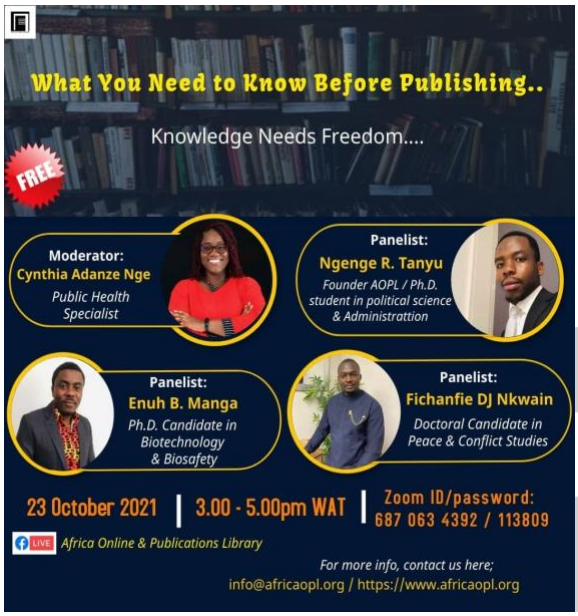
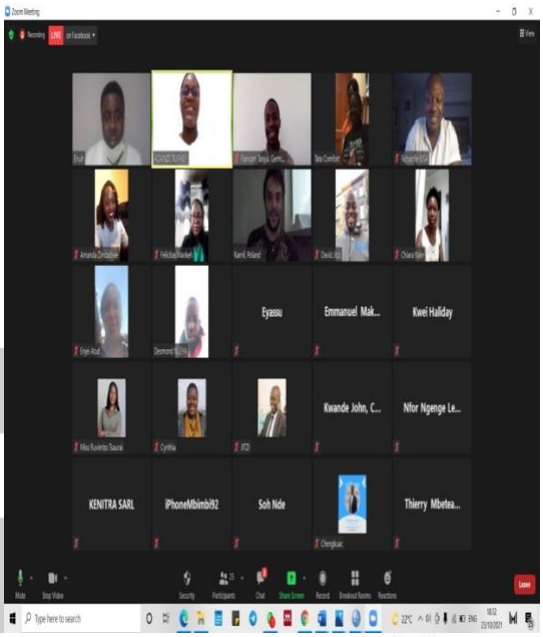
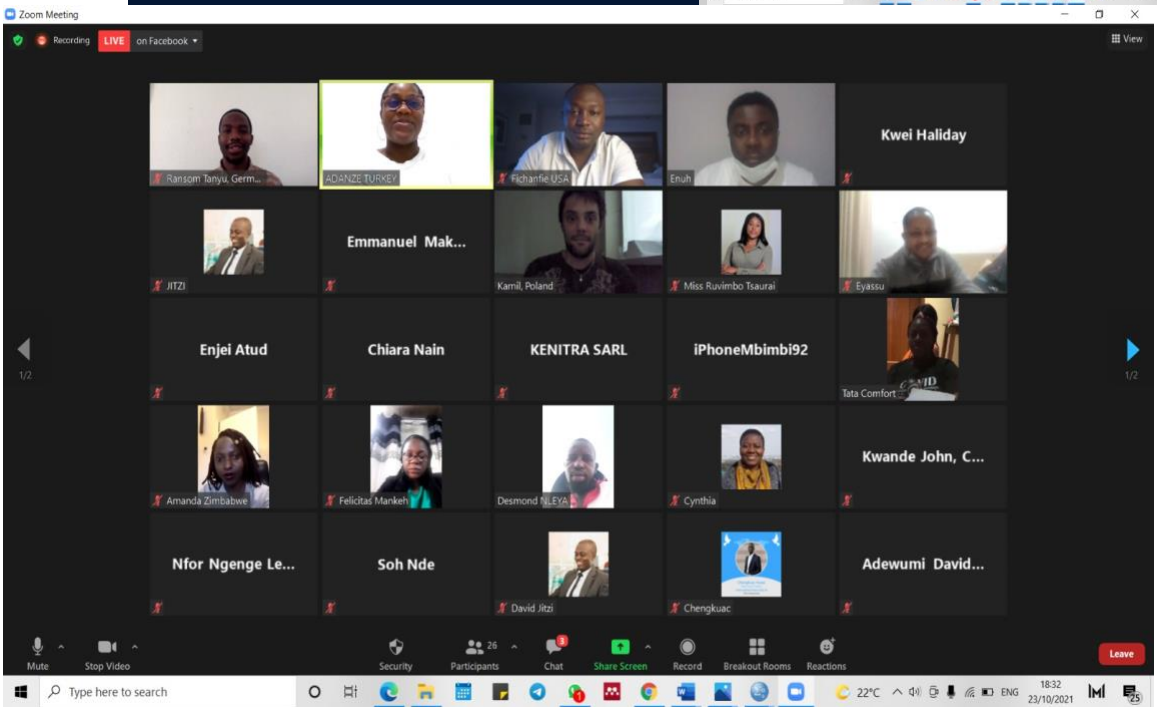
Webinar gallery







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- **Webpages**

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https://www.sciencealert.com/these-8-papers-were-rejected-before-going-on-to-win-the-nobel-prize

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