

ISSN 2410-4981. E-ISSN 2508-1055

2019, 6(1). Issued 3 times a year
Has been issued since 2014.

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Postal Address: P. O. Box FW 22, Effiduase-Koforidua, Eastern Region, Ghana

Release date 23.04.19.

Format 21 × 29,7/4.

Website: <http://kadint.net/our-journal.html>
E-mail: sarfojo@therapist.net

Headset Georgia.

Founder and Editor: KAD International

Order № 14.

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ISSN 2410-4981

Editorial

Who is to Blame for the Dearth of Viable Local Journals in Africa? A Desperate Call

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“So who cares if all the local journals in Africa extinct?”

Generally, there is an assertion that Africa as a continent provides the world with relatively small research output. This perception seems valid since Africa accounts only for 2 % of the global research output (Moahi, 2012). Furthermore, most of these studies are published in foreign journals by African authors. This practice is due to several reasons. Firstly, some researchers prefer foreign journals to local ones due to the perceived prestige of publishing abroad (Alemna, 1996). Secondly, they choose foreign journals because of their swift review process, and high visibility through international abstracting and indexing (Tarkang, Bain, 2019). Although these factors may seem harmless to the average African researchers and academics, they may affect the degree of quality manuscripts submitted to existing local journals and journal viability rate in Africa.

Another factor worth noting regarding the high mortality of local African journals is the gloomy financial status of journals. Like the case of the Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education (JARE) which was established in 2014 with donor funds (Sarfo, 2018), African journals often function solely on donor support, “with no income or revenue” (Clobridge, 2014: 7). The only benevolent offers they get from institutions like their host universities include “office space, office equipment, telephones, or internet access” (Clobridge, 2014: 7). As this “cashless status” persists for many of these local journals, their failure to thrive may become inevitable.

Furthermore, the “cashless status” of many African journals worsen with the fact that many of these African journal publishers feel obliged to publish print versions in addition to online versions. Though this process is expensive, African respondents in Clobridge’s (2014) study indicated that print is often preferred due to “requirements (or preferences) by university libraries, readers, and promotion committees at universities” (P. 7).

Again, local journals face scarcity of quality manuscript submissions due to the policy demands of African universities to encourage researchers and academics to publish in high Impact Factor to earn promotions (Clobridge, 2014). Other local publishers due to systemic challenges like financial strains and difficulty in obtaining reviewers take too long to complete reviews. Hence, African researchers and academics are literally pushed away to submit their papers to foreign journals who appear more effective in terms of publishing standards (Tarkang, Bain, 2019).

To an extent, we as Africans are to blame for the dearth of viable local journals in Africa. African authors, publishers, and academic institutions all play subtle and obvious roles in making

local African journals less viable over the years. Until we learn as Africans to fix these gaps by accepting our local journals as authors and adopting effective publishing standards as publishers, our local journals will not survive the test of time. As the future looks murky for local African journals, many of these journals will struggle to publish high-quality and relevant studies to meet this unending pressure if nothing is done by Africans (Tarkang, Bain, 2019).

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Published in the Ghana

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ISSN 2410-4981

Articles and Statements

Leonid Schneider calls Springer Nature's Science and Engineering Ethics Predatory, Without Proof

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Paper Review Summary:

Received: 2019, February 17

Received in revised form: 2019, March 29

Acceptance: 2019, March 30

Highlights

- Leonid Schneider is one of the most active and vocal science watchdogs.
- Springer Nature's *Science and Engineering Ethics (SEE)* is a leading indexed ethics journal.
- Schneider called *SEE* "predatory" on social media on several occasions, without proof.
- Several ethics-related bodies, including COPE and *SEE* itself, never responded.
- The intersection between science ethics, activism, and social media, is highlighted.

Abstract

In the world of academic publishing, to refer to a journal or publisher (or any other scholarly entity) as "predatory" carries with it a very serious and negative connotation, and can damage its reputation if that claim is made in public. If such a claim is supported by clear evidence, then it becomes a valid critical opinion because it is substantiated. Even if others share different opinions, the original claim cannot be false if clearly substantiated by evidence. However, if such a claim is made without solid support, then such a claim can be defamatory. Academics are weary of the nature of such claims from the Jeffrey Beall era. Between May and December of 2017, Leonid Schneider, currently one of science's most vocal watchdogs, Tweeted on several occasions that Springer Nature's *Science and Engineering Ethics (SEE)* was "predatory", in one Tweet even stating that "They are deeply unethical crooks at Science & Eng Ethics!" These are not light claims to be made in public. Moreover, Twitter is not simply a private communication medium, it is a powerful disseminative social media tool that is used by academics, and others, to give maximum exposure to a message. In this case, Tweets were likely made to cause reputational damage. Academia has entered a new phase in its evolution where polite communication about the issues to save the image of the for-profit publishing model is being tested by select individuals or groups, who sacrifice political correctness in the name of truth. If Schneider were to provide clear proof of his claims that *SEE* is predatory, then this would rock the world of ethics publishing, because *SEE*

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represents one of the most established academic ethics journals globally, ranked third based on its Clarivate Analytics journal impact factor. On September 16, 2017, the author contacted Schneider to request a full and thorough list of properties that led him to make these accusations in public. In that email, the *SEE* co-editors-in-chief, Raymond Spier and Stephanie Bird, Springer Nature, COPE and other related individuals were copied, with a formal request to offer feedback. Almost two years after that email, not a single entity has ever responded. Spier deceased at the end of April 2018, leaving a vacuum in this challenge by Schneider on *SEE*. This paper offers some perspectives about this case, and the wider implications of making accusations in public, especially using Twitter, which is now clamping down on social media aggression, of a potentially defamatory nature, without proof or substantiation.

Keywords: Defamatory, Ethics, Fact Versus Opinion, Lack of Proof, Public Perception, Science Journalism, Science Watchdog, Social Media, Twitter.

Evidence of Leonid Schneider's Tweets critical of *Science and Engineering Ethics*

On May 31, 2017, Leonid Schneider, currently one of the most vocal science watchdogs (Teixeira da Silva, 2016), and who runs a blog "For Better Science", Tweeted during the 5th World Conference on Research Integrity[†] that Springer Nature's *Science and Engineering Ethics* (*SEE*) were "deeply unethical crooks" (Fig. 1A)^{*}. To place that comment within context, that Tweet was in response to a Tweeted statement (Fig. 1B)[§] made on the same day by Matt Hodgkinson, Hindawi Corporation's Head of Research Integrity^{**}, regarding Raymond E. Spier, one of two *SEE* editors-in-chief^{††}. On June 14, 2017, Schneider Tweeted that *SEE* was "predatory" (Fig. 1C)^{**}, and following a challenge by Christian Munthe (Fig. 1D)^{§§}, who claims to be a bioethics researcher and blogger on his Twitter account^{***}, Schneider further claimed that *SEE* publishes "fraud and garbage", at a cost (Fig. 1E)^{†††}. Schneider appeared to defend his position by citing Matt Hodgkinson, while insulting *SEE* once more, noting that it publishes "diatribes"^{****} (Fig. 1F)^{§§§}. Finally, to cement his view that *SEE* is predatory, Schneider, in response to a Tweet by pseudonymous *Neuroskeptic* (read concerns about this entity in Teixeira da Silva, 2017a) about a paper published at *SEE* by the author of this paper (Al-Khatib, Teixeira da Silva, 2019), claimed that *SEE* is "notoriously predatory" (Fig. 1G)^{****}, suggesting that this status (as predatory) is both widespread, known^{††††} and acceptable among a wide swathe of academics. Readers are advised to read the full thread of Tweets related to

* <https://forbetterscience.com/>

† <http://wcri2017.org/>

* <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/869852726523547648> ("They are deeply unethical crooks at Science & Eng Ethics! #WCRI2017")

§ <https://twitter.com/mattjhodgkinson/status/869851870570872832> ("Ray Spier: "too good to be true" research deserves publishing even if wrong to stimulate field. He edits an ethics journal! o_o #WCRI2017")

** <https://about.hindawi.com/team/matt-hodgkinson/>

†† <http://www.springer.com/philosophy/ethics+and+moral+philosophy/journal/11948/PSE?detailsPage=editorialBoard>

** <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/874972147759943680> ("A predatory journal "Science & Eng Ethics" @SpringerLink publishes an article about saving research from predators")

§§ <https://twitter.com/christianmunthe/status/874992896272990208> ("@schneiderleonid: That ray Spier makes an ethical argument you disagree with doesn't imply the journal he is EiC for is predatory.")

*** <https://twitter.com/christianmunthe>

††† <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/874996737148059648> ("The EiC announced to publish fraud and garbage so his journal can fill its pages. Which are then sold as subscription. Isn't it predatory?")

*** <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diatribe> ("archaic: a prolonged discourse"; "a bitter and abusive speech or piece of writing"; "ironic or satirical criticism")

§§§ <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/874997917962174464> ("Well, @mattjhodgkinson was there, not I. I just know what horrible diatribes this journal publishes")

**** <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/908637763385352192> ("Published in a notorious predatory journal @SpringerLink")

†††† <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/notorious> ("generally known and talked of"; "widely and unfavorably known")

each of the Tweets summarized in this paper, to obtain full and more comprehensive coverage of the discussions on Twitter, and to obtain a wider perspective than that offered by the author.

Given these repeated serious public claims, or allegations, and given the “respectable” standing of SEE in journal ranking, on September 16, 2017, the author challenged Schneider by email, requesting that concrete scholarly evidence be provided to support the claims made in his Tweets. That email was copied, among other proponents related to this case, to the two SEE co-EICs, Raymond Spier and Stephanie Bird, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) co-Chair, Chris Graf (because Springer Nature is a COPE member, as is SEE; note that Graf works for Wiley, as the Director of Research Integrity and Publishing Ethics), and Matt Hodgkinson, as well as other interested parties such as Retraction Watch, another science watchdog. To date, no response has been received by any of the parties contacted, despite a reminder and request for evidence, feedback and commentary on October 1, 2017. In particular, no evidence has yet been provided by Schneider to support his claims, and the SEE leadership has not offered any response and has instead opted to remain silent.

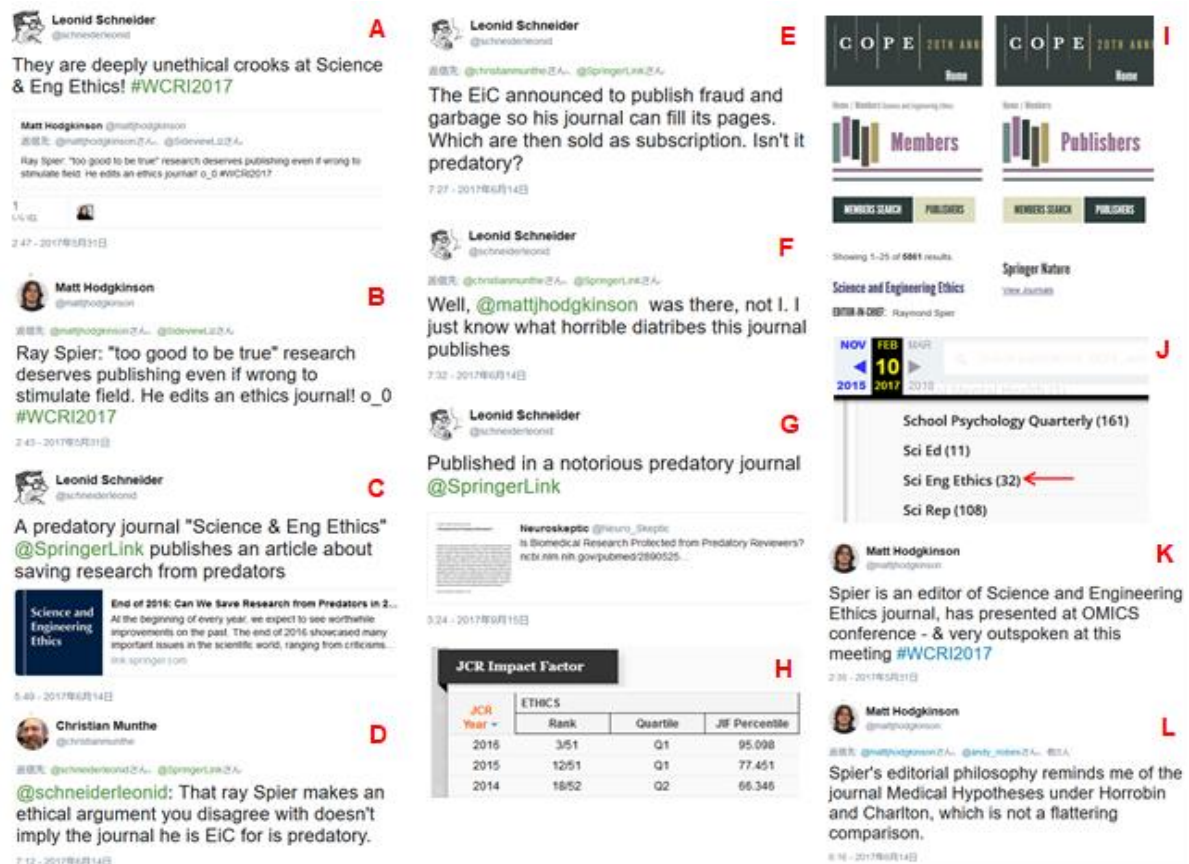


Fig. 1. Evidence of Tweets sent by science watchdog Leonid Schneider

These Tweets were used as the means to accuse Springer Nature’s Science and Engineering Ethics (SEE) of being “predatory”, as well as level other accusations at this journal and/or its leadership (A, C, E-G), despite the rapid rise in rank of this journal among “ethics” listed journals from 18/52 in 2014 to 3/51 in 2016 according to Clarivate Analytics’ Journal Citation Reports Impact Factor (H). Christian Munthe questions Schneider’s claims (D). Both SEE and Springer Nature are COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) members (I). Matt Hodgkinson, Hindawi Corporation’s Head of Research Integrity, takes some jabs at one of the SEE’s editors-in-chief, Raymond E. Spier (B, K, L). Tweet dates: (A, B, K, L) May 31, 2017; (B-F) June 14, 2017; (G) September 15, 2017. Non-Tweet screenshot dates: (H, I) October 2, 2017; (J) October 3, 2017.

Sources:

- (A) <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/869852726523547648>;
 (B) <https://twitter.com/mattjhodgkinson/status/869851870570872832>;
 (C) <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/874972147759943680>;
 (D) <https://twitter.com/christianmunthe/status/874992896272990208>;
 (E) <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/874996737148059648>;
 (F) <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/874997917962174464>;
 (G) <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/908637763385352192>;
 (H) <https://jcr.incites.thomsonreuters.com/JCRJournalProfileAction.action> (behind paywall);
 (I) <https://publicationethics.org/members/journals/Science%2520and%2520Engineering%2520Ethics> (left); <https://publicationethics.org/members/publishers?name=Springer> (right);
 (J) <https://web.archive.org/web/20170210135854/https://www.pubpeer.com/journals/>;
 (K) <https://twitter.com/mattjhodgkinson/status/869849911151525888>;
 (L) <https://twitter.com/mattjhodgkinson/status/874978865600442368>.

On December 12, 2017, Schneider reaffirmed that he believed that *SEE* was predatory*, and solidified those claims again on December 17, 2017†. Schneider also suggested on November 4, 2017, that the world’s largest open-access mega-journal, *Scientific Reports*‡, also published by Springer Nature, was predatory§. A circular-style email sent by Bird on June 15, 2018, indicating that Spier had passed away on April 28, 2018, was meant to assuage those contacted - presumably authors – that the functionality of the journal was intact. After almost two years, it can be safely assumed that no evidence exists, no evidence will ever be provided, and that the parties contacted (Schneider, COPE, science watchdogs, Hindawi’s Matt Hodgkinson, Wiley’s Graf, and others) will ever respond. This paper examines some of the issues related to this case study, as part of a wider learning curve associated with the complexities of publishing that academics must face, as well as a deeper examination of how the currently vocal science watchdogs are operating to improve, as they see themselves, the state of science and science publishing.

Ethical and moral concerns in this case

The main possible ethical and/or moral concerns raised in this case can be assigned to three entities:

1. Leonid Schneider has provided zero evidence to support his accusations;
2. Raymond Spier, Stephanie Bird, Springer Nature, and COPE remained silent;
3. Matt Hodgkinson and/or Hindawi offered no feedback or clarification.

1. Leonid Schneider provided zero evidence to support his accusations

Schneider is the central topic of discussion as he is the individual who leveled serious accusations about the academic standing of a highly ranked – at least according to Clarivate Analytics’ JCR journal impact factor (JIF) – ethics journal. The primary accusations that were stated publicly, all via Twitter, were that this journal is not only predatory, but that it is notoriously predatory, that the leadership, specifically Spier, the Co-EIC, publishes “fraud and garbage” that is then sold for profit, via subscriptions, by Springer Nature, and that *SEE* publishes “horrible diatribes”. These are not minor issues. They are serious accusations.

In recent years, academics have become aware of the “predatory” open access (OA) movement thanks, in part, to an awareness campaign launched by Jeffrey Beall on his blog at the beginning of this decade. However, global academia has also, since the sudden and inexplicable closure of that blog in January of 2017 – still without a crystal clear explanation to the public by

* <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/940103981535080448> (“Predatory journal @SpringerNature retracts anti-vax paper. Because even too hot even for them?”)

† <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/942321208477016064> (“1. This is predatory journal. 2. Stop educating your audience how backwards Asians are compared to USA.”)

‡ <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2017/04/06/scientific-reports-overtakes-plos-one-as-largest-megajournal/>

§ <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/926879254545096704> (“Is @SciReports your predatory journal, @SpringerNature?”)

Beall or his academic institution, the University of Colorado, Denver (Teixeira da Silva, 2017c) – become wary of the “predatory” label for a journal or publisher, OA or not. This is because the way in which the term “predatory” has been used in an applied manner varies widely, in some cases without any clear definition, and has started to lead to a discriminatory and potentially libelous* use among academics to discriminate against other academics. As one example, in Teixeira da Silva (2017c), see criticisms of Beall, Beall’s flawed and biased lists and of those who have (ab)used the Beall lists such as Derek Pyne (Pyne, 2017) at the School of Business and Economics, Thompson Rivers University, Canada, who labelled his colleagues’ papers that were published in OA journals on Beall’s lists as “predatory papers”, relying on the Beall blacklists to level that accusation. This is problematic given the flaws and weaknesses of such blacklists (Teixeira da Silva, Tsigaris, 2018). Had global academia, and Beall himself, heeded to the advice of this paper’s author back in 2013, and applied a quantitative score – even if now currently outdated and imperfect – to quantify the level of academic “predation” (Teixeira da Silva, 2017d), then most likely Beall’s blog as well as his lists would have seen continuity, because they would have been substantiated by clear evidence of characteristics that made them predatory, and thus led them to be validly termed as a predatory OA journal or publisher. Beall would have gained wider respect and his lists might then have been used for official purposes because the criteria he used to list his “predatory” OA journals or publishers would have been adequately quantified. However, since this did not happen, it is widely believed (this still remains highly speculative) that legal action against Beall and/or his lists and/or his institute – as was alleged on October 10, 2017, against the Swiss-based publisher Frontiers Media† – may have spurred the closure of his blog, Beall, his lists, and the attitudes that accompanied both should now be considered academically extinct.

Schneider does not appear to have learned any lessons from Beall’s case, most likely because he appears to be an avid Beall supporter, and also a staunch critic of Frontiers, which was considered by Beall to be a “predatory” OA publisher‡, even though it is a paying COPE member§. Consequently, Schneider has, absent any concrete evidence of his claims, used the term “predatory” loosely, and perhaps erroneously, to label *SEE*. It is possible that Schneider has valid reasons or clear evidence to slap this “predatory” label on this Springer Nature and COPE member journal, but absent this evidence, his characterization that was made in public with the apparent intent to smear the image of this journal and its leadership, primarily Raymond Spier, remains false and possibly defamatory. Despite a formal request (and subsequent reminder after 2 weeks on October 1, 2017) to Schneider to provide that evidence to support his claims that *SEE* is “predatory”, as well as evidence that it publishes “fraud and garbage”, no such evidence has yet been provided. Absent this evidence, i.e., *SEE* appears to be anything but notoriously predatory, as Schneider claims, one can simply conclude that no such evidence exists and that these claims are false and thus potentially defamatory** statements to shame the journal, its EICs, and/or the publisher. As for business advertising, where false claims are treated as a criminal or illegal act (e.g. in Australia††), so too should such claims made on social media be treated in the same manner. If so, then what would be the motivational factors behind such false claims (McKay, Kinsbourne, 2010)? It is the opinion of this author that such an attitude, which represents an immature, reckless and irresponsible journalistic practice, could merit a legal threat** by the publisher, Springer Nature, at minimum to request Schneider to delete those Tweets and to offer a formal apology in public for false claims, or to provide the evidence to support those claims. This is because the use of social

* <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/libel> (“a written or oral defamatory statement or representation that conveys an unjustly unfavorable impression; a statement or representation published without just cause and tending to expose another to public contempt”)

† <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170920150122306>

‡ <https://forbetterscience.com/2017/09/18/frontiers-vanquishers-of-beall-publishers-of-bunk/>

§ <https://publicationethics.org/members/publishers?name=Frontiers>

** <https://www.hg.org/defamation.html>

†† <https://www.accc.gov.au/business/advertising-promoting-your-business/false-or-misleading-statements>

** Schneider has been sued in Germany by Philipp Jungebluth and the Heike and Thorsten Walles couple for libel: <https://forbetterscience.com/2017/04/06/judge-in-jungebluth-trial-announces-to-uphold-his-injunction-dismisses-all-evidence/>; <https://forbetterscience.com/2017/03/23/will-words-or-actual-evidence-count-in-the-walles-case/>

media by Schneider and others claiming to be science journalists to spread false or unsubstantiated information is fortifying the notion that science and science publishing are clearly in a new age of “false” or fake (Teixeira da Silva, 2017e), and that the Schneider message is not in fact “For Better Science”, as his blog title claims, but in fact constitutes a clear case of social tabloid or smear journalism (Popović, Popović, 2014).

This use of social media may be reflecting a new trend in academic publishing, as one branch of the post-publication peer review movement (Teixeira da Silva 2015a; Teixeira da Silva et al., 2017), namely the rise in power of individuals who may be invested in the destruction of science, or of science and the science publishing status quo, or a new science anarchist movement. This could involve the use of social media platforms such as Twitter to spread a false and/or unsubstantiated message, as was leveled against *SEE* and/or Springer Nature and thus also indirectly against COPE, since *SEE* and Springer Nature are COPE members (Fig. 1I). Schneider has developed a special antipathy towards COPE* (disclaimer: the author is also critical of select aspects of COPE, such as inconsistent use of COPE guidelines among COPE members; e.g., Teixeira da Silva, 2017f; or even challenging its moral compass; Teixeira da Silva, 2019). Although much can be said and criticized about Schneider and his blog, a deeper analysis of this science watchdog will be left for separate analyses, as there is much to analyze and discuss, but a final message is left for the reader: is it not ironic that Schneider criticized John Dawson, the EIC of Elsevier’s *Journal of Inorganic Chemistry*, for not dignifying his email with a response, stating “I contacted with this information the journal’s chief editor and chemistry professor at University of South Carolina, John Dawson as well as his four associate editors, but they did not dignify my email with a reply”? Incidentally, the author of this paper sent an email to John Dawson on October 8, 2017, and received a response on the very same day.

2. Raymond Spier, Stephanie Bird, Springer Nature, and COPE remain silent

When the publishing status quo offers silence in response to public criticisms, then this is a bad sign of poor academic engagement and may reflect opacity. Faced with opacity, opacity tools offer protection to both positive and negative freedoms and serve as a shield against false inferences (Gutwirth, 2007). It might also indicate, however, that the parties who are being labelled as “predatory” and as peddling “fraud and garbage” consider these claims to be trivial or false, enough to ignore them. However, by remaining silent, the three core publishing-related entities in this case (*SEE*, represented by its co-EICs Spier and Bird; the publisher, Springer Nature; COPE, which offers a paid-for ethics shield and brand label to both journal and publisher) have set a potentially unwanted precedent, namely that false or unsubstantiated claims can be made in public, such as on Twitter, about them, without any rebuke or repercussions. Silence also offers the unsubstantiated possibility that the claims made are true. This silent attitude may also be an approach to avoid conflict with the base of academics, which, together with their research institutes, is the primary source of its business revenues and profits, i.e., is this a standard procedure of business etiquette? The media has been implicated in inducing a spiral of silence by an impositional position regarding a specific issue (Kim et al., 2004), in this case, the constant claim by Schneider that *SEE* is “predatory”. Another possible counter-argument is that engagement with Schneider in public might invite other critics to join the fray, resulting potentially in a never-ending cycle of attack and defense of *SEE*, Springer Nature and/or COPE, inducing thus a Streisand Effect[§].

Without in any way trying to appear sympathetic or supportive of Schneider’s claims that *SEE* is “predatory” or that it publishes “fraud and garbage”, the following facts can be gleaned about the perception of this journal and/or publisher by two other prominent science watchdogs:

1) Springer Nature was the second most profiled publisher, after Elsevier, by Retraction Watch, another science watchdog, with 337 entries (vs. 604 for Elsevier), in October 2017;

* <https://forbetterscience.com/2017/03/29/cope-the-publishers-trojan-horse-calls-to-abolish-retractions/>;
<https://forbetterscience.com/2015/10/31/join-the-committee-ignore-publication-ethics/> (as two clear examples within the search for COPE on the Schneider blog: <https://forbetterscience.com/?s=COPE>)

† <https://forbetterscience.com/2017/09/29/the-rise-and-fall-of-an-antivax-paper-by-smut-clyde/>

* http://www.sideroad.com/Business_Etiquette/workplace-etiquette.html

§ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Streisand_effect

2) *SEE* had nine registered entries at Retraction Watch*, one of which relates to the author of this paper, who called on the resignation of one of the *SEE* EICs, Stephanie Bird, following failed peer review that took in excess of 20 months to complete, independent of the reason provided†. *SEE* appears to have taken steps towards correcting this issue, and currently appears to provide timely feedback and editorial decisions, at least in the experience of the author, which is a positive development that can serve as an example for other journals or editors in the same predicament (Teixeira da Silva, Dobránszki, 2017).

3) *SEE* had, in February of 2017, 32 entries listed at PubPeer (Fig. 1J; PubPeer no longer keeps free journal-by-journal records after it implemented a new platform, PubPeer version 2, and now charges to access such information), another science watchdog that has financial backing by a US philanthropic organization, The Laura and John Arnold Foundation. There are serious issues with opacity at PubPeer (Teixeira da Silva, 2018b).

Can the public expect a response or rebuttal from *SEE* and Springer Nature to the unsubstantiated claims made by Schneider? And should COPE, the “ethics” lobbying organization that provides the ethical cape for this journal and publisher, but which has a proven track record of sitting on the fence and/or showing silence and/or apathy towards ethical situations that involve its paying members (Teixeira da Silva, 2017f), continue to offer no advice regarding the use of social media such as Twitter to make unsubstantiated claims against its members?

3. Matt Hodgkinson offers no feedback or clarification

Matt Hodgkinson is one of the more publicly conscientious publishing-related ethicists who has risen to rapid prominence in recent years, appearing frequently at ethics-and publishing-related meetings and symposia. In his position as Hindawi Corporation’s Head of Research Integrity, Hodgkinson is both in a privileged and a precarious position. Privileged because he acts as judge and jury over ethical decisions in all Hindawi journals, which run a highly profitable OA journal fleet‡, and precarious because what he says and does in public has consequences on the field of ethics, and would also affect Hindawi’s reputation. Personal opinions about ethical topics or about other ethicists are thus not encouraged, not as a way to silence his opinions, but as a sign that a true ethicist remains tone-neutral, and thus transparent (Menéndez-Viso, 2009). It is therefore surprising to learn the tone of the opinions that Hodgkinson held, and expressed in public via Twitter, of *SEE*’s Raymond Spier. One Tweet was a subtle jab (Fig. 1K) while the other was a direct insult (Fig. 1L). It is unclear if this reflects personal or professional animosity that may have existed between Hodgkinson and Spier, or if it reflects an inter-publisher animosity, between Springer Nature and Hindawi Corporation, two competing publishers for the OA publishing market. Given these relationships and standing of these “ethicists” in the world of biomedical publishing, real – but undeclared – conflicts of interest now exist.

Conclusion

The publishing process is complex and challenging, and it appears to be getting more so with each passing day. This conclusion can only be gleaned after extensive experience, in some cases negative ones, over decades of close engagement. The experience of the author of this paper has shown that many parties are responsible for error: authors, journals and their editors and EICs, and publishers (Teixeira da Silva, Shaughnessy, 2017). In addition, the current publishing culture is struggling to deal with multiple pressures, including now a new pressure, namely open and public criticism, including on blogs and social media such as Twitter. Open debate and criticism are healthy because it can engender positive change and reform, and hopefully lead to an improvement in publishing. Bias is ever-present because individuals are always subject to leaning most towards their own opinions and interpretations, but claims should always be substantiated, as best as possible, by factual evidence.

In this paper, the focus was placed on Leonid Schneider, who is currently one of the most vocal and outspoken science watchdogs, but who has leveled serious accusations about the academic and scholarly nature of a Springer Nature ethics journal, *Science and Engineering Ethics*.

* <http://retractionwatch.com/category/by-journal/sci-eng-ethics/>

† <http://retractionwatch.com/2014/07/21/publishing-gadfly-demands-journal-editors-resignation-then-has-fairly-incomprehensible-paper-rejected/>

‡ <https://archive.fo/W3frg>

If those claims are true, and if Schneider can substantiate them with concrete cases and evidence, then the consequences and repercussions for the journal and publisher will, and should, be serious. However, absent any evidence, the consequences and repercussions for Schneider will, and should, be serious. Zollo et al. (2015) consider “the diffusion of unsubstantiated rumors on online social media [...] one of the main threats for [...] society”. There must also be consequences for Matt Hodgkinson, Hindawi Corporation’s Head of Research Integrity. Silence, i.e., the lack of communication on the part of all parties, in this case, is against a fundamental principle of conflict resolution (Zucker, 2012), and is one reason why science and science publishing are perceived to be in an evolving crisis.

The critique of publishers and of the status quo publishing establishment is not easy and can have serious consequences. As a real example, the author of this paper has been made *persona non grata* by an Elsevier journal, *Scientia Horticulturae*, and also banned from all Taylor & Francis / Informa journals from submitting to these journals, in response to criticisms of their editorial processes and/or publishing models. This indicates that criticism and critique are not in fact welcomed, or are rarely welcomed, and are subjected to punishment if it may cause reputational damage or bruise the for-profit business model by shedding a negative light on poor scholarly conduct by leading publishers, to avoid being referred to as “predatory”. Stifling the opinions, including criticisms, made by the academic base, is anti-democratic, and is not a healthy way to resolve conflicts (Toegel, Barsoux, 2016). Such tyrannical actions can, instead, have a chilling effect on freedom of speech, and can serve as ways to temper the criticisms by the academic base, which feeds the profits of the current publishing status quo, either as subscriptions, or as OA article processing charges (Al-Khatib, Teixeira da Silva, 2017). Consequently, it is currently extremely difficult to publish papers that are critical of journals or publishers because there is a constant fear of personal and/or professional reprisals from powerful entities. Despite this, the author can point to ways, exemplified by four cases, in which a publisher could be critiqued, via publications, when evidence is available (see details in each case: Teixeira da Silva, Dobránszki, 2013; Teixeira da Silva, 2015b; Teixeira da Silva, Al-Khatib, 2017; Teixeira da Silva, 2017g). Naturally, other possibilities include blogs and social media platforms such as Twitter.

The publishing industry is also evolving rapidly, and the failed IPO by Springer Nature* might not only indicate market weakness, but also a lack of market confidence in the publisher, even as a result of reputational damage, such as that inflicted by Schneider. Also, Schneider should be more self-conscious about the evolving landscape of hate speech, online harassment and potentially libelous and unsubstantiated claims using his blog and Twitter. For example, Germany imposed a social media hate speech law in Q3-Q4 of 2017†, while Twitter has also taken concrete steps, since 2016, but cemented in October of 2017‡, and again in May of 2018§, to curb hate speech and possible slanderous communication as exemplified by Schneider. The issue of public shaming, the border between public criticism and slander, and the use of such techniques by the science watchdogs, is unfortunately not a highly pertinent topic of academic discussion (Teixeira da Silva, 2018c), but should be. Moreover, Spier, in passing away, has left many questions unanswered and several conflicts unresolved. Even after deceased, academics have responsibilities (Teixeira da Silva, Dobránszki, 2015), and in this case, these must be borne by Bird, SEE, Springer Nature and COPE.

Prior to this submission, this paper was submitted to SEE on October 16, 2017, and was rejected by SEE on October 19, with the following reason: “It is the policy of SEE not to engage in personal conflicts. I would like to thank you very much for forwarding your manuscript to us for consideration and wish you every success in finding an alternative place of publication.” In other words, SEE encouraged the publication of this case study, but not in SEE.

* <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2018/05/15/springer-nature-ipo-withdrawn/>

† <https://techcrunch.com/2017/04/05/german-cabinet-backs-e50m-hate-speech-fines-for-social-media-firms/>; <https://techcrunch.com/2017/10/02/germanys-social-media-hate-speech-law-is-now-in-effect/>

‡ <https://techcrunch.com/2017/10/13/twitter-ceo-promises-to-crack-down-on-hate-violence-and-harassment-with-more-aggressive-rules/>

§ <https://slate.com/technology/2018/05/twitter-will-start-hiding-tweets-that-detract-from-the-conversation.html>; <https://twitter.com/jack/status/969234280655147008>

Schneider apparently does not only consider Springer Nature and/or *SEE* as predatory and has extended his use of predatory to characterize Elsevier* and Karger Publishers†, each within different contexts, while referring to the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* as a parody journal‡.

Conflicts of interest

The author has written about Leonid Schneider, a science watchdog and journalist, in Teixeira da Silva (2016), and has used his blog as a platform to offer post-publication peer review, commentary, and critique. After criticizing Schneider and commentators on his blog of clear violations to written comment policy, the author was banned from commenting on the Schneider blog in early 2017. The author was critical of the editorial handling by the Springer Nature journal that is the subject of this paper, *Science and Engineering Ethics*, for peer review that took over 20 months to complete, leading to a rejection and case profiling by another science watchdog, Retraction Watch§. The author has published over a dozen papers in *Science and Engineering Ethics* over the past few years. Other than these, the author declares no other related conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.

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* <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/944115508152061953> (“From tea-drinking China, by predatory publisher @ElsevierConnect : “Drinking Tea Improves the Performance of Divergent Creativity””) December 22, 2017; <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/946478641550159872> (“Publishing nonsense papers in predatory journals is poppycock. Fake @liu_universitet professor Tiwari published predatory papers in Biosensors & Bioelectronics @ElsevierConnect, helped by EiC @APFTurner”) December 28, 2017

† <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/1004336901006995457> (“How can anyone take those predatory tospots seriously?”) June 6, 2018

‡ <https://twitter.com/schneiderleonid/status/945223473248591872> (“Ah, that's why @JCventer avoided peer review and published his bullshit face prediction paper in that parody journal @PNASNews”) December 25, 2017

§ <http://retractionwatch.com/2014/07/21/publishing-gadfly-demands-journal-editors-resignation-then-has-fairly-incomprehensible-paper-rejected/>

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ISSN 2410-4981

Development of Future English Language Teachers' Communicative Competence in Higher Pedagogical Institutions: A Review

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Paper Review Summary:

Received: 2018, December 18

Received in revised form: 2019, March 10

Acceptance: 2019, March 11

Highlights

- Future English language teachers' need to build communicative competence.
- Foreign language tends to change the emphasis and training of future teachers.
- English-language communicative competence contributes to the saturation of cultural content within the teaching of English.
- Foreign language can be viewed as both an academic discipline and an aspect of culture.

Abstract

This review explored the actual problems identified in the formation of future English Language teachers' communicative competence in Higher Pedagogical Institutions. The paper reviewed the factors affecting the formation of English communicative competencies among future teachers. The purposeful formation of English language competence among future teachers is possible through acquiring the culture and discipline of the English language. This will help advance the level of intercultural competence and pedagogical tolerance.

Keywords: Communicative Competence, Educational Activity, English Language, Future Teacher, Training.

Introduction

The integration processes that take place in all spheres of public life which include the development of international relations, the mobility of mankind and the expansion of spheres of socio-economic activities contribute to the growing importance of foreign language acquisition (Saville-Troike, Barto, 2016). Globally, the need for solving new problems that meet the requirements of modern society with the help of foreign language acquisition has made the need for foreign language education urgent (Tarnopolsky, 2015). In the context of integrating into the European educational space, there is a rethinking of the importance of foreign languages at the expense of society's demand for specialists who are fluent in foreign languages. Years after Ukraine's independence, new priorities for educational and economic development have demanded the

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creation of a new regulatory framework and a number of laws on educational change according to stakeholders and researchers (Tarnopolsky, 2015; Tarnopolsky, Storozhuk, 2017).

With the expansion of international contacts and the humanization of education, practical knowledge of foreign languages has helped contribute to the formation of the social personality of future teachers to engage with other cultures and languages (Tarnopolsky, 2016). In improving the pedagogical process, conditions have to be created for the formation of a creative, active, independent, and competent personality of specialists with a high level of knowledge and skills in the context of training future teachers. In modern society, young people live in an open global community where they have the opportunity to communicate with representatives of different cultures through different media (Ashley, Tuten, 2015). The education of future foreign language teachers provides opportunities for business, professional and cultural contacts in a world culture with common human values. This aspect also determines the relevance of the research (Tarnopolsky, 2016; Tarnopolsky, Storozhuk, 2017). The social order determines the formation of communicative competence as one of the main goals of teaching foreign languages in all educational institutions. The expected destination of a foreign language tends to change the emphasis and training of future teachers (Tarnopolsky, 2016; Tarnopolsky, Storozhuk, 2017). Thus, there is a problem of constructing the conformity of theory and practice to the modern society's needs that faces the existing pedagogical institutions. The aim of the article is to analyze the components, processes, and challenges faced in developing future teachers' English-Language communicative competence in Ukraine.

Future English Language Teachers' Skills

The system of teachers' training should meet the norms of human relations in society. It should also promote the formation of students' mobility in solving professional and communicative tasks creatively and independently. Furthermore, it should ensure the development of skills to adapt quickly to changes in the professional sphere, which is achieved through increased professional training and improvement of the training process of all the foreign language activities. An analysis of scientific sources suggests that a significant contribution to the study of the concept of foreign communication skills was made by foreign and domestic Ukrainian scientists (L. Birkun, R. Johnson, I. Zimnya, G. Kityagorodskaya, S. Kozak, E. Passov, V. Safonova, D. Heights, etc.).

Within the framework of communication in the global sphere, Ukraine currently takes an active part. Thus, the need for foreign language fluency for everyday living and in professional activities cannot be underestimated. Again, the peculiarities of the development of computer technology and the global internet network make it possible to conclude that English as a language is prevailing worldwide. Again, not only a profound knowledge of the professional field is urgent for modern teachers, but well-developed communication and computing skills are required. The purpose of teaching foreign language students is to develop their competence in foreign language use as a means of intercultural interaction. Works of many scholars over the years have been devoted to the problems of integrating cultural components of learning foreign languages (Kalinina, 2010; Markova, 1995; Passov, 1991; Safonova, 1996; Shevchenko 2005; Zhimnya, 2003). However, the questions of determining the totality of factors for effective development of foreign language competence among future teachers have not yet been investigated sufficiently.

Quality of Communicative Competence for Future Teachers

Communicative competence includes a set of abilities, qualities, and personality characteristics necessary for mastering professional activities in any field successfully (Bezukladnikov et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is understood by many scholars as a system-based component of professional competence (Tarnopolsky, Storozhuk, 2017; Zhimnya, 2003). Despite the theoretical and practical importance of these studies, it should be noted that in the theory and practice of higher pedagogical education, the problem of developing communicative competence for a foreign language (specifically, English) in non-linguistic faculties of higher educational institutions had not been fully explored. Similarly, accepting communicative competence as a degree of a person's involvement in communicative activities suggests that the foreign language training of future teachers has to be a condition for mastering professional knowledge (Tarnopolsky, 2015). Thus, this should be seen as one of the required components of language competence within the teacher's personality as a whole (Barashnikova, 2005).

Such an interpretation of communicative competence leads particularly to changes in the context of teaching activity, which is also determined by value points, and attention to the development of students' spiritual culture. This, in general, leads to the creation of a new paradigm of higher education as a creative and developing process through the prism of culture. The culturological approach in future teachers' training leads to the use of the principles of humanization, integrity, integrity, integration as the key. In this case, special attention is paid to the formation of a general culture of the individual as a professional basis for the training of any specialist. These factors in the development of the theory and methodology of teaching English to future teachers lead to a clear understanding of the importance of foreign language training as a condition for professional mastery and communicative competence (Bezukladnikov et al., 2014).

English Language at the Higher Pedagogical Institutions

The educational function of "English language" as an academic discipline at the higher pedagogical institutions creates opportunities for future teachers to receive the necessary information not only from domestic sources but also from foreign countries. This is particularly important in the formation of professional competence. The educational function of the English language is the formation of a highly cultured personality, which has a sense of duty, personal dignity, moral consciousness, and possesses the rules of speech behavior. The acquisition of English contributes to the development of students' memory, thinking, and attention (Kadakin et al., 2016).

In the teaching of English, there is a significant need for the separation of the language of communication and metamorphosis, through which vocational education is carried out (Barashnikova, 2005). At the initial stage, the language of communication prevails, on the basis of which gradual involvement in the metalanguage of communication is carried out. The specificity of teaching students of English language using teaching programs involves the use of the philological method of representation of cultural information. This leads to the formation of English-language communicative knowledge; the basis of which is laid in the initial stage of language learning. With further expansion and deepening of this knowledge, certain English-speaking communicative skills are developed, which indicates the formation of an average level of communicative competence. As a result of the formation of English-language communicative competence, the future teacher's ability to perceive speaking and writing should be to such an extent, which would be sufficient for the formation of professional competence.

The communicative competence of the future English language teacher includes the following professional qualities:

- Openness, ability to adapt quickly to new ideas, respect for foreign language culture, tactfulness, one's emotional state control, etc.;

- Knowledge of the essence of intercultural communication, ethnopsychology, etc.;

- Ability to identify, analyze and compare phenomena of a foreign language and one's own culture, to choose one's own style of speech behavior, etc. (Ibragimova, 2000). Foreign-language communication competence is an effective means of forming the personality of a future teacher. This type of competence contributes to the development of students' personal qualities raising the level of interest in mastering the language, enabling the student to use not only his/her consciousness but also his/her feelings and emotions. Formation of English-language communicative competence in the process of language learning is characterized by a combination of teaching intercultural communication with the parallel development of the features of the future profession, and the expansion of students' cultural awareness associated with the peculiarities of future professional activities (Kalinina, 2010).

- Factors forming the foreign-language communicative competence of the future teacher are conditionally divided into objective and subjective.

Objective factors include:

- Reconstruction of the process of learning foreign languages;

- Use of interactive teaching methods that enable to simulate real communication situations, solve pedagogical problems collectively, use pedagogical games, create an atmosphere of cooperation, etc. (Kalinina, 2010);

- Use of authentic texts; culturological component in the choice and designing of educational material;
- Periodic control of knowledge, students' skills, and abilities;
- Teacher's personality (respect for the student, the ability to understand his inner state, the ability to create a psychologically comfortable atmosphere in the class, a high level of foreign language competence), etc.

Subjective factors include:

- Student's qualities (motivation, a sense of innovation, tolerance to a different point of view, a positive attitude towards a foreign language culture, etc.);
- Analysis and comparison of cultural phenomena, knowledge acquisition about intercultural communication and cultural phenomena, etc.
- Foreign-language communicative competence is understood as a combination of specific knowledge and skills that a member of a linguistic society needs in order to make speech contacts with others and to master the language as a discipline (Kazakova, 2007). In addition, it involves the individual's ability to carry out productive interaction through his knowledge of another country's culture. This is done in accordance with a tolerant attitude towards the national-cultural specifics using the system of linguistic norms and speech rules to choose communicative behaviors that are adequate to the specific context of communication.

The main indicators in the formation of the English-language communicative competence are cultural knowledge if the direction and dynamics of the dialogue of cultures are correctly defined. Pedagogical conditions are set out for the realization of the possibilities of intercultural dialogue as a factor for the formation of foreign language competence. This also allows for the intensification of the teaching of the foreign language by expanding the level of intercultural connections, etc. Among the pedagogical conditions for the formation of English-language communicative competence, it should be emphasized that the teacher's orientation on the values of intercultural dialogue should be stressed. Intercultural dialogue can be manifested in the cognitive, emotional and operational aspects of the teacher, pedagogical and personal tolerance, and orientation towards a pedagogy of cooperation.

In designing the content of the dialogue of cultures, cultural-educational information taking into account the originality of the values of their native culture, the interrelation with universal values and other values of cultures and the intensification of foreign language teaching at the expense of interdisciplinary connections. Additionally, it should involve the simulation of intercultural communication situations in the educational process. Thus, these conditions stimulate the formation of the English-speaking communicative competence of students in the process of learning English.

Conclusion

The formation of English-language communicative competence contributes to the saturation of cultural content within the teaching of English. Also, this competence can promote the organization of the learning process as a dialogue of cultures through the use of the educational potential of folklore, interactive forms, methods and techniques of development of foreign language activity. Furthermore, it allows the use of original teaching aids and the integration of traditional techniques with the latest learning technologies. Foreign language should be considered not only as a discipline but also as a competence in the process of learning the culture of the language. Consequently, in the process of effective formation of the foreign-language communicative competence, training for future teachers should rely on the principles of creating the necessary foreign language regime. This should be done by integrating the language of communication and metalanguage.

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<http://kadint.net/our-journal.html>



ISSN 2410-4981

“I Experience Very Sharp Pain but It’s On and Off”: A Phenomenological Study of Postoperative Pain Experiences of Patients in Ghana

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Paper Review Summary:

Received: 2019, March 29

Received in revised form: N/A

Acceptance: 2019, March 30

Highlights

- Participants’ postoperative pain felt prolonged than they expected.
- Analgesic intake was driven by fear of death, the desire for a reduced level of pain, and enhanced comfort.
- Common non-pharmacological methods like conversations, watching television, and meditation was adopted by participants.
- Postoperative pain management should be client-centred to meet the unique comfort needs of patients

Abstract

Postoperative pain has been a challenge for the healthcare industry for many years in Africa especially Ghana. However, its management has not received adequate attention like other aspects in the industry as it is evident that clients who undergo surgery continually experience much pain after surgery. The study sought to explore patients’ experiences with postoperative pain management. The study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. In all twelve (12) participants were recruited for this study using purposive sampling approach. Participants were interviewed in a face to face manner with the help of a semi-structured interview guide. These were patients who had survived more than twenty-four (24) hours after surgery. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) guided the active generation of four themes which described participants’ postoperative pain management experiences. Pain disability, dualistic engagement with nurses, drivers and discomforts of analgesic intake and casting the mind off pain characterized participants’ postoperative pain management experiences in the current study. Pain disability represented the debilitating nature of the postoperative pain experience which affected their activities of daily living. Participants described both positive and negative nursing encounters which were covered under the dualistic engagement with nurses. The drivers

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and discomforts of analgesic intake related to participants' motivation for taking prescribed pain medications and some of the untoward effects they experienced with such drugs. Casting the mind off pain illustrated participants' engagement in non-drug techniques due to their potential in distracting them from their prevailing postoperative pain. Unrelieved postoperative pain and its undesirable effects persist despite decades of advanced technologies and research on pain. Postoperative pain care should be individualized to meet the unique comfort needs of patients. Analgesics and non-drug techniques should be encouraged to maximize postoperative pain relief with minimal or no untoward effects.

Keywords: Ghana, Pain Management, Patients, Phenomenological Study, Postoperative Pain.

Introduction

Postoperative pain is an acute type of pain caused by surgical incision and manipulations of body parts during operation. Even though it is often expected, unrelieved postoperative pain can lead to negative psychological, physical, social and spiritual consequences which delay the recovery process, increases the cost of healthcare, and impairs an individual's quality of life (Aziato, Adejumo, 2015; Cohn et al., 2016). A study conducted by Lovich-Sapola, Smith, Brandt (2015) revealed that inadequate postoperative pain management may lead to pathophysiological complications such as atelectasis, pneumonia, nausea, and vomiting. A substantial number of postoperative patients also report of unsatisfactory pain management due to poorly controlled pain and its associated loss of paid working days and interruptions in one's daily living activities (Edusei et al., 2017).

Although African Union summits and workshops have adopted good and effective pain management as a basic human right, most surgical patients in Africa do not receive adequate pain management (Ofori, 2017). Though pain resulting from surgical intervention has a far bigger burden, Woldehaimanot, Eshetie, Kerie (2014) indicate that only about 10 % of patients who have surgery in Africa receive good and adequate pain management. Faponle, Soyannwo, Ajayi, (2001) revealed that two-thirds of surgical patients reported pain of moderate to severe intensity 24 hours after an operation in Nigeria.

The situation in Ghana is not different from these reported studies. Postoperative patients in Ghana continue to experience a substantial amount of pain after the surgical operation (Aziato, Adejumo, 2015). Previous research at the Agogo Presbyterian Hospital in Ghana showed that patient dissatisfaction with postoperative pain management still persists in spite of advances in pain management (Ofori, 2017). At the centre of postoperative pain management is the patient who must endure diverse levels of pain resulting from the surgical operation. It is therefore important to explore the experiences of these patients in order to gather empirical evidence to inform practice, education, healthcare leadership, and policy. The current study, thus, intended to explore experiences of postoperative patients regarding pain management at a teaching hospital in Ghana.

Methods

Design

A qualitative study using the phenomenological approach was deemed appropriate as the researchers were interested in describing the lived experiences of postoperative patients regarding pain management.

Setting

The study was conducted in a tertiary level healthcare facility which also serves as a clinical training site for healthcare providers in Ghana. It is one of the leading referral hospitals in Ghana. The hospital has a bed capacity of one thousand and two hundred (1200) and comprises twelve (12) clinical directorates and four (4) non – clinical directorates. The hospital has been conducting high profile surgeries and has been assisting in other relevant charity events since its establishment.

The study was conducted precisely at the surgical wards of the hospital under the surgical directorate. There are six (6) surgical wards at this directorate which admit cases from the main theatres of the hospital. Each ward has a minimum bed capacity of sixteen (16) and at least three nurses per shift. The surgical directorate in total has a bed capacity of one hundred and seventy-six

(176). The directorate provides main services like specialist OPD services, in–health surgical operations, day-case surgeries, ultrasound services and wound dressing services.

Sampled participants and sampling

A purposive sampling method was employed to select two patients from each of the six surgical wards of the teaching hospital. A total of twelve participants were recruited for the current study, comprising five males and seven females. All patients selected had survived their respective surgeries for more than twenty-four (24) hours. More so, no participant declined or dropped out of the study. However, persons who could not speak audibly and persons who could neither speak and understand Asante Twi (Local dialect) or English were excluded from the study.

Data collection and analysis

Prior to the main data collection for the study, a pre-test was carried out using a semi-structured interview guide that was designed to meet the research objectives. Pre-testing of the interview guide was carried out using three postoperative patients, a male and two female patients who had survived more than twenty-four hours of their respective surgeries (herniorrhaphy, appendectomy, and excisional biopsy) in another healthcare facility. The pre-testing took place two weeks before the major study was rolled out in order to gain inputs from participants regarding the clarity and relevance of included items, and those that ought to be omitted or added on. The pre-testing proved that the interview guide was clear, precise, concise and easily understood by the participants. Thus, no modifications were made to the interview guide for the main study.

Eligible participants were approached at the surgical wards and verbally informed about the intent and purposes of the study, assuring them of anonymity and seeking their participation or otherwise. Eligible participants who signed the consent form to participate in the study were interviewed at an agreed upon date and time. Interviews were facilitated by EFK at side wards of the various wards and at the bedside of clients who could not move out of bed. The interviews were considered as a professional conversation that consisted of an agreed dialect by both parties (interviewer and interviewee), with no other person other than both parties present. Eight of the interviews were carried out using the English language whereas four of them were conducted using an indigenous popular language in Ghana called “Asante Twi”. The interviewer followed the conversational threads that emerged and guided the conversation towards the production of a full account of participants’ postoperative pain experiences. Cognizant of the possibility of participants’ digressing from the main themes in an interview session (Francis, Fitzpatrick, 2013), responses were regulated with well-tailored follow-up questions to keep them on track. As each interview went on, notes were taken, and full audio recording of the conversation was made after obtaining participants’ consent. A minimum of twenty (20) minutes was spent on interviewing each respondent.

Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently until saturation was achieved after the twelfth participant interview. Data familiarization in the current study was ensured through repeated listening and self-transcription of the recorded interviews by the researcher who facilitated the interview sessions. The four (4) interviews conducted in Twi were forward-translated into English and later back-translated into Twi by a professional transcriptionist in order to maintain content integrity – data translation is necessary to enable researchers to understand the meaning of linguistic features (Agu, 2017). Data transcription was performed using Microsoft Word and transported to NVivo 12 plus software for thematic data analysis. The current study adopted the bottom-up inductive way of identifying study patterns with the primary purpose of allowing research findings to emerge from the data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. Guided by the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), participants’ data were analysed using the three-stage approach (transcribing, coding and representing the data) (Creswell, Poth, 2017). Thus, the core purpose of exploring the lived experiences of postoperative patients regarding pain management was achieved.

Rigour

The study adhered to Guba and Lincoln’s criteria for enhancing quality in qualitative studies (Guba, Lincoln, 1989). Credibility and confirmability of the current study were achieved through member checking of the content and main ideas explored during the interviews, as well as peer checking of the themes by 3 experienced qualitative researchers. Transferability and

dependability of the study findings were also accomplished by describing the context of the research and the procedures involved in the entire research endeavour.

Results

Demographics

In all, 12 participants were interviewed in the current study: seven females and five males. Their ages ranged between 19 and 55 years. Participants had their highest formal education at primary (5), secondary (4) and tertiary levels (3). These participants went through eight different surgical operations namely: amputation, appendectomy, cholecystectomy, excisional biopsy, exploratory laparotomy, herniorrhaphy, mastectomy, and prostatectomy. Four participants had previously been operated upon before the current surgery.

The study identified four major themes which described participants' experiences regarding postoperative pain management. These were "pain disability", "dualistic engagements with nurses", "drivers and discomforts of analgesic intake", and "casting the mind off the pain".

Theme 1: Pain disability

This theme describes the disabling nature of participants' postoperative pain experience and the effects this had on their life and daily activities. Existence of pain was an obvious manifestation of surgery as almost all participants expected to endure some level of pain after surgery. Some participants expected to experience short-lived pain after the surgery but to their surprise, they ended up having to endure prolonged pain postoperatively. A participant reiterated this with the following quotes:

"Of course, I expected to go through some pain after surgery but never thought it was going to take more days [as] it has taken me. I expected to go through the surgery and be discharged quickly, maybe after two to three days" (Helen, Mastectomy).

"Today is my third day after surgery yet, I am still having pain. I didn't know it will take this long" (Olive, Appendectomy)

Participants' also described their experiences of sharp debilitating pain on the first few postoperative days (2-3 days after surgery) which affected their engagement in daily living activities such as mobility and sleep. Eight out of the 12 studied participants reported mobility restrictions and sleeplessness amidst the undesirable experience of sharp pain that could not be relieved. One of them described:

"I experience very sharp pain but it's on and off, surfacing about twenty times during the day. In bed, I do not find it easy to move and must be lying sideways. I find it very difficult to sleep. I am able to move alright when I am out of bed but I still feel some pain" (Stephen, Prostatectomy).

Theme 2: Dualistic engagement with nurses

Participants recounted both positive and negative encounters with nurses regarding the management of their postoperative pain. The positive experiences centred around nurse-patient communications and responsive nature of nurses towards pain assessment and management during the postoperative period. Some of the participants had this to say regarding communication:

"Most nurses communicate well with us. They respond to calls nicely and sound approachable. Nurses often show respect as they use "please", "hello" and some other courteous responses" (Stephen, Prostatectomy).

"All the nurses here are good. I have been to other hospitals and I think they have good communication skills with us" (Helen, Mastectomy)

Majority of the participants also indicated that the nurses believed their self-reported pain and responded quickly to their postoperative pain needs through appropriate assessment and management. Some participants expressed these through the following excerpts:

"Whenever I tell the nurses I am going through pain, they believe and come to my aid to help. They don't underestimate my pain" (Seth, Exploratory Laparotomy).

“They [nurses] are always here to assess my pain as soon as I complain and as a result, I do not suffer abnormal pain” (Ahmidya, Cholecystectomy).

“They don’t underestimate my pain, they always believe me and help me with what they can” (Olive, Appendectomy).

Participants’ negative experiences with nurses also centred on their poor communication skills, lack of prescriptive authority and unyielding posture. They described these encounters as follows:

“There are some nurses whose human relations are not good. They are woeful somehow, show some level of empathy but not enough” (Stephen, Prostatectomy).

“The nurses are not able to give me any extra or different drug to control my pain. They always tell me to wait for my doctor, so I keep my pain to myself till the doctor arrives” (Prince, Hernniography).

“Of late I have decided to stop reporting pain to nurses because they cannot prescribe any other drug unless the doctor. Some nurses also prove adamant, so I do not feel like complaining about my pain to them. I only do so under unbearable situations” (Francisca, Mastectomy).

Theme 3: Drivers and discomforts of analgesic intake

This theme was generated from participants’ motivation for taking prescribed postoperative analgesics and some of the untoward effects they experienced from taking these medications. Some of the drivers for analgesic intake included the fear of death, the desire for a reduced level of pain, and enhanced comfort. The following remarks support this assertion.

“I have been given medications which I always take as prescribed. I need to do as I am told because I am sick, and the medicine is to relieve my pain so if I do not take it then I am digging my own grave” (Elvis, Herniorrhaphy).

“I always take my medications. I want to feel less pain, so I make sure I don’t miss a dose” (Helen, Mastectomy).

Two out of the 12 participants also admitted some discomforts they experienced which led to the cessation of their initially prescribed postoperative analgesic medications. They narrated these discomforts in the following manner:

“At a point in time, I decided not to take the medicine called Diclofenac which gave me very serious pain when I took it. I then complained to my doctor who agreed with me and asked that I should not take it again” (Firdaus, Mastectomy).

I also had an instance where I experienced a sudden sharp pain in my stomach which I complained to my doctor and I was asked to stop taking my drugs (Olive, Appendectomy).

Theme 4: Casting the mind off the pain

Participants described non-pharmacological pain management approaches which they engaged in to distract them from their pain. Common methods adopted by participants in the current study included conversations, watching television, and meditations. One participant described it as follows:

“I try on my own to engage in conversation with my in-mates or any visitors and health practitioners who come around first to cast my mind off the pain. Sometimes too I go through intensive meditation and praying quite often to distract my attention from my pain, which sometimes I end up falling asleep” (Agyemang, Amputation).

Discussion

The present study sought to explore the lived experiences of postoperative patients regarding pain. Our findings revealed that participants endured prolonged unrelieving pain which affected their participation in daily living activities such as mobility and sleep. A study by Gan and colleagues (Gan et al., 2014) revealed that patients report moderate to severe postoperative pain which is inadequately managed. Among the negative consequences of unrelieved postoperative pain, restricted mobility and sleeplessness have been documented in the literature (Goldstein et al., 2004; Kinney et al., 2012; Montes et al., 2015). The disabling effects of unrelieved postoperative pain underscore the need for effective management strategies to return the patient to optimal functioning and enhance their quality of life.

Interestingly, the negative patient experiences with nurses also revolved around their poor communication skills, lack of prescriptive authority and unyielding posture. Even though most of the participants were satisfied with nurse-patient communication during the postoperative phase, a few of them were dissatisfied with this aspect of nursing care. Nurses need to improve upon their communication skills to meet the unique and culturally sensitive communication needs of different clients they encounter in the healthcare enterprise (Mohamed et al., 2013; Zoëga et al., 2015). It was also revealed that nurses' inability to prescribe analgesics other than those ordered by surgeons contributed to poor patient communications with nurses regarding their pain concerns. Nurse prescribing is increasingly gaining international popularity due to the advancements in nursing practice specialities with its associated role expansion amidst other contextual factors (Shannon, Spence, 2011). The benefits of nurse prescribing have been documented to include relatively faster and efficient patient care, enhanced nurse-client relationship and increased satisfaction with care delivery among others (Courtenay et al., 2011; Ross et al., 2014; Tinelli et al., 2015). Despite these benefits, nurse prescribing is still in its infancy in Ghana. Healthcare policymakers could take advantage of nurses' knowledge and expertise to reduce the prescription burden on physicians and enable more patients to gain efficient access to safe and regulated analgesia during hospitalization.

"Drivers and discomforts of analgesic intake" was the third theme that emerged from participants' postoperative pain management experiences. Participants in the current study described the fear of death and the desire for pain relief as reasons why they adhered to the prescribed analgesic regimen. These findings are similar to the research investigation conducted by Weiss et al. (2014) in which the goal of pain relief remained supreme among the reasons given by the sampled participants for their analgesic intake. Despite the motives underpinning their analgesic intake, some participants in the present study reported untoward drug effects which resulted in the cessation of their initially prescribed analgesics. The effectiveness of any treatment intervention is judged by the balance between its efficacy and side effect profile (Reed, 2013). Even though analgesics remain the mainstay in postoperative pain management, their use may be restricted due to adverse side effects. Effective postoperative pain control using both drug and non-drug techniques must be prioritized in order to provide optimal pain relief with minimal or no harmful effects.

Participants in the current study engaged in a range of non-pharmacological pain management methods due to their distractive ability which aided them in casting their minds off their pain. Apart from reducing the amount of analgesic consumption and its associated harmful effects, non-pharmacological pain relief methods hold promise as effective complements to the analgesic regimen (Chou et al., 2016). The use of non-pharmacological approaches has been shown to be effective in the affective, cognitive, behavioural and social aspects of pain management (Coutaux, 2017). Efforts should be made to widen the scope and accessibility of these methods so that patients can be encouraged to utilize them to improve postoperative pain management.

Conclusion

Unrelieved postoperative pain persists despite decades of advanced technologies and research investigations on pain. Unrelieved postoperative pain affects patients' engagement in activities of daily life which ultimately affects their quality of life. Nurses are central to the management of postoperative pain and should individualize their care to meet the unique comfort needs of patients. Policies should be implemented to expand the roles of nurses who work with postoperative patients to include some level of prescriptive authority to enhance patients' confidence in their ability to adequately cater to their pain-needs. Analgesics and non-drug techniques should be encouraged to maximize postoperative pain relief with minimal or no untoward effects.

Abbreviations

CHRPE: Committee on Human Research Publication and Ethics; IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; KNUST: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology; OPD: Out-patient department; RDU: Research and Development Unit; SMS: School of Medical Sciences.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The study was approved and registered at the Research and Development Unit (RDU) of the teaching hospital, permitting the researchers' access to participants at the selected study sites. Ethical approval of the study was also granted by the CHRPE, KNUST – SMS, Ghana (Ref: CHRPE/AP/387/18). Participants' privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were ensured throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

Consent for Publication

Ethical approval was obtained for the study and each participant signed informed consent before participating.

Data availability

Data for the current study would be available upon reasonable request.

Author's contribution

EFK and EAB designed the study. EFK, EAB and AKA analysed and interpreted the results. EFK drafted the manuscript. All authors read and approved the manuscript.

Competing Interest

The authors (EFK, EAB and AKA) declare they have no competing interests.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to the participants for their voluntary involvement in the current study.

Funding

The study was financially sustained by the researchers without any external support.

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