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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond Open Access: An Analysis of Business Models among Indian DOAJ-Indexed Journals

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ABSTRACT

Open-access journal publishing has surged in recent years, driven by business models that enable unrestricted, equitable access to scholarly research for a global audience. This study examined the leading business models adopted by Indian open-access journals indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), with particular emphasis on APCs, other charges, and APC waivers, as well as on non-APC journals (Diamond journals) supported by learned societies and research institutes. The study further evaluated selected best publishing practices, including peer-review processes, the adoption of Creative Commons licences, and digital preservation and archiving arrangements. The study also examined subject coverage, publisher dominance, and SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) indicators to assess the journals' disciplinary distribution and international standing. By integrating these dimensions, the study provides a comprehensive overview of the journals' business models, publishing practices, and structural characteristics, contributing evidence to discussions of publication costs, transparency, and the sustainability of open-access scholarly communication in India. The study found that 70% of the journals are non-APC-based and supported by learned societies and individual institutions. 30% of journals operate on APC-based models, collecting publishing costs from either authors or authors' institutions; some charge additional fees, some offer APC waivers; overall, 80% of journals are controlled by commercial publishers.

Keywords: *Open access publishing; Business models; Open Access Journals; Article Processing Charge; Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ); SCImago Journal Rank; Creative Commons licensing*

INTRODUCTION

Scientific publishing has traditionally relied on subscription-based journal models. Rising subscription costs and restricted access led to the development of an alternative publishing model called open access (Borrego, 2023). The global Open access movement, particularly the Budapest Open Access Initiative, the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing, and the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge

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in the Sciences and Humanities, collectively worked to establish a robust global open access system (Björk, 2011). Open Access (OA) offers unrestricted, free access to research papers and the right to reuse them with proper attribution, without requiring journal subscriptions (Quaia et al., 2024). Open Access (OA) publishing activities normally operate under two main models: Green OA, which involves hosting published papers in a repository, and Gold OA, which involves publishing scholarly works, such as articles, monographs, or conference proceedings, directly in open-access journals, making them immediately and freely available online (Laakso et al., 2011). While the Gold OA publishing model guarantees instant free access, it often requires Article Processing Charges (APCs), typically collected from authors or their institutions, or by research grants (Björk & Solomon, 2012). Open-access journals are gaining popularity across all spheres of knowledge. Characteristics such as faster publication, wider visibility, easier communication, and free access to content have given these journals a new identity. However, both business models face difficulties in maintaining a consistent and ongoing continuous publishing business; non-APC journals rely solely on learned societies and institutions, whereas APC-based journals create difficulties for authors or their institutions in paying APC charges, particularly for those from poor financial backgrounds or in third-world countries (Frank et al., 2023).

BUSINESS MODELS IN OPEN-ACCESS PUBLISHING

Open access has transformed scholarly publishing by eliminating subscription fees, giving the global community unrestricted access to research. This model effectively removes financial barriers, particularly benefiting authors from institutions with limited funding. The two major business models in OA journal publishing are the APC publishing model and the Diamond publishing model.

Open access (OA) publishing represents a transformative departure from this conventional model, providing unrestricted, cost-free access to research papers and the right to use these resources with appropriate attribution, without the need for conventional journal subscriptions (Björk & Solomon, 2012). This emerging paradigm seeks to democratize access to scientific knowledge, fostering collaboration, innovation, and societal impact (Chatterjee et al., 2014). Open Access (OA) publishing needs support to transform scholarly communication; online hosting, distribution, and services require funding. Initially, open access journals relied largely on volunteer efforts and limited funding. A major turning point came in the year 2000 with the emergence of two professional publishing entities, the Public Library of Science (PLoS) and BioMed Central (BMC), both of which adopted the article processing charge (APC) as their primary revenue source for journal operations (Björk & Solomon, 2012). Subsequently, many established publishers launched their own open-access journals using the APC business model, reshaping the landscape of academic publishing and accessibility.

APC model

The primary funding source for publishing OA journals is Article Processing Charges (APCs), often called publication fees, a key mechanism in open-access scholarly communication. As Van Noorden (2013) notes, authors pay this fee to ensure their research is publicly available without barriers, whether in fully open-access journals or hybrid journals that offer both subscription and open-access options. The author does not bear this charge alone; various stakeholders can share it, including the author's affiliated institution or the research funding organisation that supported the work. The APC covers a range of operational and developmental costs (Kaliuzhna et al., 2025). These include the overarching publishing infrastructure and ongoing projects; the specific processes involved in journal publication; editorial staff compensation; the administrative overhead of managing the rigorous peer-review system; and essential marketing and communication activities to host and disseminate research findings effectively (Yoon et al., 2024). This comprehensive approach to funding academic publication is widely recognised as an innovative, internet-driven paradigm that offers a compelling alternative to conventional publishing models. The widespread adoption of APCs signals a broader shift towards a more inclusive, accessible academic landscape, fostering greater knowledge dissemination and accelerating scientific progress (Wolpert, 2013).

Dimond Model

The Diamond model of open-access publishing uses a distinctive funding structure, unlike the more common article processing charge (APC) or subscription-based models. It relies on funding and contributions from a diverse range of institutions, including universities, academic societies, research foundations, and government agencies, without imposing fees on authors or readers (Kumari & Subaveerapandiyan, 2025). Diamond Open Access relies on shared infrastructures and open licensing (ACLS, n.d.). The diamond open access model is increasingly recognised as the most equitable and sustainable form of open access publishing (Agyei et al., 2026).

DOAJ AND ITS ROLES IN OPEN ACCESS

The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is an indispensable online platform that indexes high-quality, peer-reviewed research journals freely accessible to a global readership. With an extensive collection of approximately 23,000 journals worldwide, the DOAJ serves as a cornerstone resource for identifying reputable open-access publications, significantly enhancing their visibility, utility, and broader impact within the academic landscape (Directory of Open

Access Journals, n.d.). Because it disseminates knowledge, researchers selected it as a primary data source for a recent study examining the multifaceted aspects of open access publishing, including growth, distribution patterns, and journals' adherence to licensing and copyright best practices. The platform's robust data provision, offering detailed information for each indexed journal—including title, subject category, publisher, Article Processing Charges details, and crucial licensing specifics—proved profoundly valuable in addressing the study's research questions.

Indian OA journals by year in DOAJ

Table 1: Annual growth of Indian OA journals by year in DOAJ

Year	Journal added	cumulative
2003	1	1
2004	6	7
2005	5	12
2006	5	17
2007	3	20
2008	7	27
2009	9	36
2010	11	47
2011	2	49
2012	3	52
2013	6	58
2014	5	63
2015	4	67
2016	22	89
2017	44	133
2018	42	175
2019	30	205
2020	25	230
2021	27	257
2022	15	272
2023	32	304
2024	37	341
2025	48	389
2026 (As of Feb19th)	21	410

Table 1 shows the temporal variation in the emergence of Indian open-access journals in DOAJ. OA journal inception was limited in the early observed period; only one journal was recorded in several years before 2003. In 2004, this rose to 6. In the mid-2000s, the number increased notably, reaching 47 journals in 2010 and 52 in 2012, the highest annual count. From 2016 to 2018, the number fluctuated, reaching 89 journals in 2016 and 175 in 2018. After 2018, the number rose sharply from 175 in 2018 to 205 in 2019, then doubled to 389 journals from 2020 to 2025. The number of Indian OA journals is increasing year by year.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to understand the key features and business models of Open Access (OA) journals published in India that charge Article Processing Charges (APCs). It uses the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) database, which, as of 19th February 2026, listed 410 OA journals from India, of which only 129 charged APCs. This study examines adopted business models, particularly APCs, publisher and subject concentration, best publishing practices, and global rankings using SJR. We express APCs in US dollars (USD) to use a uniform currency, as most journals report APCs in USD and only a few report prices in Indian Rupees or other currencies. We converted these currencies to USD using exchange rates as of 23 Feb. 2026, based on the Reserve Bank of India. The findings provide insights into the evolving landscape of open-access publishing in India, highlighting both the strengths and areas for improvement in these journals. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the global conversation on open-access and to improve the visibility and credibility of Indian scholarly work. To the best of our knowledge, no previous study has compared the business models of Indian OA journals in the DOAJ database, particularly their use of APCs. The authors examine these aspects to identify problems and potential solutions in the Indian environment.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the non-APC model called the Diamond model and the APC-based business model adopted by Indian journals/publishers, and provisions for APC concession/waiver and additional charges.

2. To understand the diverse landscape of subject coverage across all fields and the consolidation among publishing houses.

3. To determine whether practices such as peer-review transparency, licensing, copyright disclosure,

and digital preservation are associated with SJR or other bibliometric indicators.

4. To examine whether longer-established journals show different levels of scholarly visibility compared with those ranked globally.

These analyses would provide a more substantive assessment of the factors associated with differences in journal visibility and strengthen the study's analytical contribution.

RESULTS

OA journal business models

Open access has transformed scholarly publishing by eliminating subscription fees, giving the global community unrestricted access to research. This model effectively removes financial barriers, particularly benefiting authors from institutions with limited funding. The two major business models in OA journal publishing are the Diamond model and APC-based OA journals.

Diamond model

The Diamond OA Journal Model relies on funding and contributions from a diverse range of institutions, including universities, academic societies, research foundations, and government agencies, without imposing fees on authors or readers. A study of 410 open-access journals found that 281 use the Diamond model, while 129 use the APC model.

A significant share of these journals is published by prominent commercial publishers, including Wolters Kluwer Medknow (170 journals), Jaypee Brothers (16 journals), Thieme Medical & Scientific Publishers (13 journals), CSIR-NIScPR (11 journals), Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (8 journals), Sage (6 journals), ICT Academy (4 journals), Indian Council of Agriculture (2 journals), and Pandian Educational Trust (2 journals). The remaining journals are contributed by 49 publishers, one each.

Learned societies, associations, universities, and research institutions provide financial support for these journals. Learned societies and associations support 146 journals; universities/colleges/research institutions support 113 journals; private universities and colleges support 11 journals; and CSIR-NIScPR (government-supported) publishes 11 journals. Learned societies and research institutions prefer to work with leading commercial publishers to publish their journals on their behalf and to cover publishing costs. Commercial publishers, particularly Kluwer Medical India, dominate these publishing and online hosting businesses and alone manage 170 journals. These publishers, in turn, are committed to upholding high standards in digital publishing, online hosting, and advanced search and retrieval capabilities, ensuring wide accessibility and discoverability of research.

APC model

A comprehensive analysis of 129 open access (OA) journals in India reveals a diverse, stratified APC landscape across journals and publishers. In this model, commercial publishers also publish journals on behalf of learned societies, universities and institutions. APC fees vary widely, from a modest $11, as exemplified by the Journal of Indian Association of Pediatric Surgeons, Natural Sciences and Applied Technology, and Pandian Tamil, to a substantial $2000, charged by the Journal of Integrative Nursing. This wide range underscores the disparate economic models used across India's OA publishing sector. A closer look at the data shows that a small fraction of these journals, four in total, charge the highest APCs, above $1000 to $2000. Next, a slightly larger cohort of six journals charges fees between $701 and $1000. The overwhelming majority of journals, however, are clustered within the lower APC tiers. Specifically, ten journals charge between $600 and $700, while thirteen journals fall between $500 and $599. A further seventeen journals fall within the $300 to $499 range. A significant proportion, 22 journals, fall within the $200 to $299 category, while the largest single group, 29 journals, has APCs between $100 and $199. Finally, 28 journals, the second-largest group, have relatively low fees, ranging from $11 to $99. Journals focusing on Sciences, Medicine, and Technology (SMT), particularly those affiliated with commercial publishers, generally tend to levy higher APCs than their counterparts in other disciplines.

Table 2: Distribution of APCs

Rates in US$	No of Journals	Percentage
1 to 99	28	21.70
100 to 199	29	22.48
200 to 299	22	17.05
300 to 499	17	13.17
500 to 599	13	10.07
600-700	10	7.75
701- 1000	6	4.65
Above 1000	4	3.10
Total	**129**	

Wolters Kluwer Medknow published 76 journals, with the highest APC at 2000 USD and the lowest at 11 USD. 23 journals have APCs ranging from 500 UAD to 2000 USD. 25 journals have APCs ranging between 499 USD and 200 USD. 19 journals levy APCs ranging between 199 and 100, and 9 journals levy the lowest APCs, ranging between 99 USD and 11 USD.

Other charges

Beyond standard APCs, a notable subset of 29 journals levies additional fees. Surprisingly, eight non-APC-based journals also impose supplementary costs. These charges take various forms, covering services such as expedited pre-review processes, the inclusion of colour graphics or diagrams, accommodation of additional pages beyond standard pages/wording, additional authors beyond three, a quick peer-review process, etc. The financial impact of these supplementary fees can range considerably, from a modest $5 to a substantial $500, underscoring the disparate economic models at play within scholarly communication.

APC waiver

The APC Waiver analysis found that of 129 APC-based journals, only 35 offered APC waivers or discounts to authors from underdeveloped nations, financially disadvantaged institutions, or member institutions. This provision fosters equity and provides equal opportunities for researchers who might otherwise face significant financial barriers to publishing. Among the publishers, Wolters Kluwer Medknow has the most, with 11 journals; Sage Publishers has 3 journals; and 18 society-controlled journals, mainly in medical science subjects, have extended the APC waiver provision. However, the waiver percentage ranges from 10% to 50%, depending on the journal and the authors' countries, such as developing countries, African countries, and SAARC countries. Most of the society publishers offer APC discounts to authors from their registered members or institutions for publishing papers. Publishers also extend APC discounts to authors from registered institutions, consortia, or countries that have transformative or subscription and publishing agreements with the publishers.

BEST PUBLISHING PRACTICES

The study cross-checked the OA journals against DOAJ data and the journals' websites, particularly their copyright and licensing policies, publication ethics, peer-review processes, access details, ownership transparency, editorial team information, and business practices. The guidelines emphasise integrity, accessibility, and inclusivity in scholarly publishing (COPE, DOAJ, OASPA, WAME).

Peer-review process

Peer-reviewed scholarly journals play a crucial role in research and development activities. The peer review process in journals consistently maintains quality and verifies publications. Indian OA journals indexed in the DOAJ widely adopt quality assurance mechanisms. All 92 Indian publishers use four different kinds of review processes across their 410 journals: 346 (84.4%) journals use "double-anonymous peer review," 49 (12%) journals use "anonymous peer review," 14 (3.4%) journals use "peer review", and one journal uses an “editorial peer review” process.

As for “double-anonymous peer review”, 346 journals adopted it; Wolters Kluwer Medknow is involved in 227 journals; Jaypee Brothers Medical Publisher adopted it in 16 journals; Thieme Medical and Scientific adopted it in 12 journals; Sage publisher adopted it in 8 journals; Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences adopted it in 7 journals. Pandian Educational Trust, JCDR Research Publications, ICT Academy of Tamil Nadu, Elsevier, and CSIR-NIScPR adopted it in 4 journals each, respectively. Medsci Publications and Veterinary World adopted double-anonymous peer review in 2 journals each. The remaining 50 publishers contributed one publication each.

Regarding “anonymous peer review”, 49 journals adhered; Wolters Kluwer Medknow adopted it in 19 journals; and CSIR-NIScPR adopted it in 6 journals. Thieme Medical & Scientific and Sage adopted it in one journal each, and 29 single-journal publishers remain covered, one each. The peer “review process” is adopted by 14 journals; Wolters Kluwer Medknow is involved in 6 journals, ICMR in 2, and the remaining 6 journals are from 6 publishers. Only one journal adopted an “editorial review” process.

Table 3: Peer-review types

Peer–review types	No. of Journals	Percentage
Double anonymous peer review	346	84.4
Anonymous peer review	49	12
Peer Review	14	3.4
Editorial Review	1	0.2
Total	**410**	**100**

Licensing and copyrights

Open-access journals typically use Creative Commons licenses, which come in six types that let copyright holders retain ownership while granting public use rights under specific conditions. Table 4 shows that 407 of 410 journals are published under Creative Commons

licensing. Among Indian open-access journals, the distribution of various Creative Commons licenses is as follows: 47 journals adhere to CC BY (attribution required), 11 to CC BY-NC (attribution required, non-commercial use only), 5 to CC BY-NC-ND, 45 to CC BY-NC, and 27 to CC BY-NC-ND. Notably, the majority, consisting of 265 journals (65.47%), follow CC BY-NC-SA (attribution required, share-alike). Additionally, 3 journals comply with CC BY-ND, and 6 with CC BY-SA (attribution required, share-alike). In contrast, 3 journals use proprietary licenses, moving away from standard open-access principles.

The Creative Commons licences and attributions used by all participating publishers remain consistent across their journals. The leading publisher, Wolters Kluwer Medknow, uses CC BY-NC-SA for all 244 journals; Thieme Medical and Scientific Publisher uses CC BY for 10 and CC BY-NC-ND for 2 journals; Sage uses CC BY and CC BY-NC for all 8 journals; Jaypee Brothers uses CC BY-NC for all 14 journals; Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences uses CC BY-NC for all 8 journals; CSIR-NIScPR uses CC BY-NC-ND for all its journals; Elsevier uses CC BY and CC BY-NC-ND for all 4 journals. This shows inconsistent use of CC BY across the publishers' journals.

Table 4: Licensing models adopted

Types	No. of Journals
CC BY	47
CC BY, CC BY-NC	11
CC BY, CC BY-NC-ND	4
CC BY-NC	45
CC BY-NC-ND	27
CC BY-NC-SA	265
CC BY-ND	3
CC BY-SA	6
Own	3
Total	**410**

Digital preservation

Adoption of quality measures ensures ongoing access to journal content even after it ceases to exist. Many Indian Open-access (OA) journals show a commitment to long-term accessibility through digital preservation efforts. The survey of 410 Indian OA journals found that 330, or about 80%, have adopted preservation and archival services. These journals use a mix of established platforms, including CLOCKSS, LOCKSS, PMC, PKP PN, Portico, Internet Archive, the Library of Congress, and the NIScPR Online Periodicals Repository (CSIR-NIScPR), either alone or in combination with two or more. This analysis highlights a concerning gap: 80 journals, or roughly 20 %, currently use no recognised digital preservation methods. Surprisingly, the leading publishers, Wolters Kluwer Medknow, ICT Academy of Tamil Nadu, Pandian Educational Trust, and JCDR Research Publication, have 4 journals each; Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers and Veterinary World have 2 journals each; and the remaining 60 journals are from singly journal publishers, all from societies, universities and private-backed journals. This lack of adherence to preservation standards and archiving raises concerns about the long-term accessibility and integrity of the scholarly content published in these journals, which could hinder future research and knowledge.

Plagiarism screening and other practices

Of the 410 journals, 343 (84%) have a "journal plagiarism screening policy" to ensure academic integrity and protect copyrights, while 67 (16%) do not follow this process. All 410 journals follow publication ethics standards and provide editorial board information, demonstrating a strong commitment to transparency and ethical publishing practices. Further, adopting digital tools to improve the discoverability and citation of scholarly works through persistent article identifiers (P.a. I.S) such as digital object identifiers (DOIs) and Handles is key to ensuring the long-term preservation and accessibility of content. Of the 410 journals, 370 have adopted DOIs, 2 use Handles, and 38 use no persistent identifier. Collectively, these indicators suggest how closely Indian OA journals align with best practices in scholarly communication.

JOURNAL DISTRIBUTION AMONG PUBLISHERS

The analysis of Open Access (OA) journals in India, as detailed in Table 5, reveals that 92 Indian publishers collectively produce 410 OA journals. Notably, most of these journals are controlled by societies and institutions, including some outside India, and collaborate with Indian Journal Publishers. In terms of financial models, 281 of these 410 journals operate without Article Processing Charges (APCs), while the remaining 129 (31 %) are purely APC-based.

It is important to acknowledge that a significant number of non-Article Processing Charge (APC) journals rely on various forms of financial backing from societies, associations, endowments, institutions, and private sources. This support often enables them to partner with commercial publishers, such as Wolters Kluwer Medknow and Sage, to publish their journals. This

model offers an alternative to the author-pays APC model.

Table 5: Journal contribution by major publishers

Publisher	Non-APC Journals	APC Journals	Journals collecting other fees	APC Waiver journals
Wolters Kluwer Medknow Publications	170	76	28	11
Jaypee Brothers Medical Publisher	16	3	0	0
Thieme Medical and Scientific Publishers	13	0	0	0
CSIR-NIScPR	11	0	0	0
SAGE Publishing	6	3	0	3
Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences	8	0	0	0
Pandian Educational Trust	2	2	0	1
JCDR Research & Pub. Pvt. Ltd	0	4	1	0
ICT Academy of Tamil Nadu	4	0	0	0
Medsci Publications	0	2	0	2
Indian Council of Agricultural Research	2	0	0	0
Veterinary World	0	2	0	1
Pushpa Publishing House	0	2	0	1
Single Journal Publishers	49	35	8	16
Total	281 (68.5%)	129 (31.5%)	37	35

Publishers Involved: Table 5 shows that 92 publishers are involved in producing 410 journals. Wolters Kluwer Medknow controls around 60% of Indian OA journal publishing, encompassing both non-APC (170) and APC-based (76) journals. Jaypee Brothers published 19 journals; Thieme Medical and Scientific published 13; CSIR NIScPR contributed 11; SAGE contributed 9; Rajive Gandhi University of Health Sciences published 8; Pandian Education Trust, JCDR Research and ICT Academy of Tamil Nadu published 4 each; MedSci, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Veterinary World, and Pushpa Publishing House each contributed 2. The remaining 53 journals are distributed among 42 other publishers. Within this group, JCDR Research stands out with 4 journals; Jaypee Brothers and SAGE each contribute 3. The final segment comprises 79 publishers, which together published 84 journals, mostly single titles.

The Article Processing Charge models show that 43 distinct Indian publishers collectively produce 129 such journals. Of these, Wolters Kluwer Medknow, a leading commercial publisher, accounts for 76 journals, representing 59% of the total. The remaining 53 journals are distributed among 42 other publishers. Within this group, JCDR Research stands out with 4 journals; Jaypee Brothers and SAGE each contribute 3. Furthermore, Pandian Educational Trust, MedSci, Veterinary World, and Pushpa Publishing House each contribute 2. The final segment comprises 35 individual publishers, each contributing a single journal to the overall count.

SUBJECT COVERAGE

Table 6 shows the subject-wise distribution of publishers across the 410 OA journals. The subject-wise analysis of 410 journals shows a significant concentration in medicine and its allied journals, which together account for 318 (77.5%) of the total. After this dominant area, the sciences contribute 25 journals (6.1%), followed by technology with 15 (3.6%). The social sciences and agriculture & allied account for 13 (3.1%) and 16 (4%) journals, respectively. Humanities and language & literature collectively account for 10 journals (2.4%). In contrast, education and Geography & Recreation each contributed three journals. Fine arts & architecture, general works & philosophy, and psychology each contributed two journals; bibliography & library science contributed only one, indicating a much lower concentration and a more limited presence in the overall scholarly landscape.

Table 6: Subject coverage

DOAJ Subject list	Journals
Agriculture	16
Bibliography. Library science. Information resources	1
Education: Special aspects of education	3
Fine Arts: Architecture	2
General Works: History of scholarship and learning	2
Geography-Anthropology-Recreation	3
Language Literature	10
Medicine & allied	318
Philosophy. Psychology. Religion	2

Sciences	25
Social Science	13
Technology	15
Total	**410**

VISIBILITY IN SCIMAGO RANKING

Using the SCImago database, the study assessed the international quality and research output of these 410 journals. It aimed to evaluate their relative impact and standing in the broader scholarly publishing landscape and to highlight regional contributions to open-access literature. By cross-checking 410 Indian journals listed in the DOAJ against SCImago, the study identified only 132 (32%) Indian open-access journals. Notably, the distribution of journals across quartiles is skewed towards the lower tiers: 4 journals (3%) are classified within Q1, representing the highest-impact tier; 30 journals (23%) are in Q2; 60 journals (45%) are in Q3; and the remaining 38 journals (29%) are in Q4, which has relatively lower impact compared to the other quartiles. A substantial 98 journals (72%) fall in Q3 and Q4. This low variability in impact highlights the need for targeted improvements to enhance quality and visibility. To address this disparity, Indian open-access journals should implement strategic initiatives to improve overall quality by adopting rigorous scholarly publishing practices and international publishing standards.

DISCUSSION

Open-access journals are gaining popularity across all spheres of knowledge. Characteristics such as faster publication, wider visibility, easier communication, and free access to content have given these journals a new identity. Open-access journals have been introduced in India over the past three decades. However, their visibility and presence were noted only after DOAJ's launch in 2003. In 2003, India registered only one open-access journal in DOAJ; now it has 410 registered journals. Among the 126 countries, India ranks 18th, with 410 OA journals worldwide. Long-term data indicate a decline from 12th to 16th place between 2012 and 2022 (Nazim, 2023; Ramaswamy, 2024). A recent Scopus study shows that Indian authors contribute significantly to non-open-access journals, ranking third, while their contribution to open-access journals ranks tenth (Varsha and Srinivasaragavan, 2025). India's participation and contribution are declining year by year. To improve OA publishing in India, Indian publishers, academic organisations, and government agencies need to rethink the quantitative and qualitative growth of OA journals by adopting appropriate open-access policies and standards and providing infrastructural and financial support, particularly APC support.

In terms of international visibility, more than 60% of Indian OA journals fall into low quartiles such as Q3 and Q4 covering. According to the SJR rankings, only 132 of 410 journals are listed; of 129 APC-based journals, only 55 are listed. Regarding APC charges, the highest APC is 2000 USD, and the lowest is 11 USD. Most journals fall within the lower APC range, from 11 USD to 299 USD; despite these nominal APCs, Indian journals still attract few contributions. By discipline, 80% of journals are in Medicine and Sciences, while contributions from the social sciences and humanities are very low; improving coverage in these underrepresented disciplines requires focused effort. A single leading publisher accounts for 80% of the journal volume, mainly in medicine and related disciplines. All Wolters Kluwer Medknow journals are backed by learned societies and institutions in India and abroad, supported by the publisher's strong publishing and online hosting infrastructure. Only a few journals are published by government-supported institutions such as CSIR-PoR, which publishes 11 journals; ICAR supports only 2 journals.

None of the Indian DOAJ-listed journals appears on the ONOS (One Nation One Subscription) list, which generally includes the highest-ranked journals from internationally renowned publishers, typically with high APCs, as ranked by Scopus or the Clarivate Index. However, incorporating Indian OA journals would offer a dual advantage. First, it would substantially increase the volume of research articles originating from India. Second, it would facilitate wider dissemination at reduced cost, since Indian APC journals typically have lower APCs than their international counterparts. This initiative would therefore foster greater inclusivity and promote a more equitable global exchange of scientific findings.

CONCLUSION

Participation in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is a vital tool for improving the discoverability and accessibility of Indian Open Access journals, ensuring fair access to scholarly content for a worldwide audience. The study revealed several key findings about DOAJ-indexed journals published in India. As of 13, 2026, DOAJ data show that India ranks 18th among 126 countries in DOAJ and remains less visible than countries such as Indonesia, Iran, and Ukraine, which far outpace India in OA journal publications. Further, this study found an imbalance in OA journal distribution across subjects; medicine and allied subjects accounted for 240 journals, while other subjects are less represented, particularly Social Sciences and Humanities. Moreover, of the 410 journals, only 132 are indexed in SCImago Journal Rank (SJR), while 275 are not, indicating lower quality and standards.

These gaps underscore the urgent need for increased government support to develop and promote open-access publishing in India. Implementing targeted strategies to increase open-access journal publications is essential to accurately reflect India's substantial research output on the global stage. To improve, institutions and the government shall formulate comprehensive OA policies and standards for India, supported by infrastructure and financial resources. Importantly, the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) programme, with an annual budget of about two thousand crore rupees, demonstrates the Indian government's commitment to improving research accessibility. It gives Indian higher education and research institutions access to 13,000 leading international journals from 30 publishers, along with provisions for Article Processing Charges (APCs) to support publishing in OA journals (ONOS, 2025). This initiative aims to elevate India's research activities to meet international standards. However, sustaining such significant financial commitments over the long term requires careful planning, and exploring alternative models suited to India's economic context, beyond OA publishing, is vital. In this context, the authors suggest that ONOS can take the initiative to reframe India's Open Access policies, provide adequate infrastructure and financial support to publish and host OA journals, particularly for universities and research institutes, and encourage Indian scholars to participate in OA publishing with APC support.

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