

Open Access or Subscription Journals - Caution, Promotion, Visibility and Credibility



‘Open Access’ (OA), by definition is “the free, immediate, online availability of research articles combined with the rights to use these articles fully in the digital environment. It is the needed modern update for the communication of research that fully utilizes the internet for what it was originally built to do — accelerate research.”¹ Although the concept of OA publications is appealing, many researchers hesitate to target OA journals due to misconceived perceptions about the quality standards of such ‘paid’ publications.



Real-life scenario

- Our combination manuscript (MSS) of 2 studies faced multiple journal rejections as one study had negative findings.
- Despite the study being incomplete, authors keen to publish negative results with valuable insights.
- Each journal willing to publish the MSS with negative study deleted. Unexpected from such scholarly subscription journals, indexed with reasonably good impact factor.
- Authors continued relentlessly and targeted an OA journal.
- Our MSS underwent a rigorous high calibre peer-review; OA journal transparently published the article with negative results!



Accelerators

- Free and easy access to content.
- Provides an impetus to disseminate knowledge widely.
- May increase the exposure and visibility, usage, and impact of your research.
- Easy access for researchers in developing countries.



Roadblocks

- No cost to end-user to read articles, but researchers must pay the expenses of publishing. This can discourage researchers from going OA.
- Hesitance to publish in OA journals: less prominent than established journals.
- Impact factor: many OA journals are new and have no impact factor.
- Compromised quality in some cases. Therefore, their credibility might be questionable.
- The risk of degradation of the scientific literature exists.
- Sustainability: It’s worth exploring if OA models can sustainably support the academic publication infrastructure in the long run.

OA does not always imply that research materials can be reused for "any lawful purpose." Although articles are free to read, they are subject to publisher rules that prohibit other usage. In some OA models, open license is available for copyright. One could opt for any out of the several models of OA publishing.² When selecting between OA and subscription journals, there are 3 most critical factors to examine- the journal's visibility, the cost of publication, and the journal's repute.



Visibility

- Since open access articles are free, more people will view and read them.
- Increased visibility gained through OA may make it easier to reach potential.



Prestige

- The significance of publication in prestigious journals; it increases a researcher's chances of promotion and obtain funding



Cost

- OA versus subscription articles: the fundamental difference - post-acceptance costs.

Cost	Subscription articles	OA articles
Researcher	Normally free to publish or with modest page or color figure charges.	Charge a set manuscript processing fee to cover peer review and editing costs.
Reader	Subscriptions - a major expense.	No expenses.

For selection of a scientific OA journal to publish, the Directory of OA Journals (DOAJ) is an excellent resource for determining the quality of the journal.³

Overall, OA has several potential benefits, including more transparency in research disclosure, fewer hurdles for systematic reviews, possible higher citation counts, and easier access to current research.

References:

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