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Open Access Religious Journals - An Analytical Study of the DOAJ

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the paper is to study the publishing trends of the open access religious journals available in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The data were collected online from the Directory of Open Access Journals and quantitative method was applied for data analysis. The data were collected in December 2017 and later presented in tabular forms to reveal the findings. The findings show that 119 religious journals are registered in the DOAJ, published from the 27 countries by 114 publishing agencies in 14 languages. The maximum number of journals (21, 17.65%) is published from Indonesia in the English language (79, 66.39%) during the 2nd decade (2010-2017) of the 21st century. The results also reveal that the majority of the religious journals (88%) doesn't charge publication fee and is peer-reviewed by the experts.

Keywords- Open access journals, online journals, electronic journals, religious journals

INTRODUCTION

The higher education institutes and research centres all over the world spend the major portion of their budget on research to generate new knowledge, verify old and reject fictitious. After conducting research in various disciplines, the researchers choose different means to communicate and share their findings with their counterparts across the globe mostly without any monetary benefit. The journals- print or electronic- are considered as the primary vehicles of communication in scholarly information transfer. However, due to the rapidly increasing cost of journals plus shrinking library budgets, it is impossible for any affluent library of the world to subscribe all the journals for its scholars. To overcome these problems, open access (OA) electronic publishing was heralded as a potential solution. The open access (OA) idea arises from a small but lively meeting convened in the Budapest by the Open Society Institute (OSI) on December 1-2, 2001. The resulting statement of this meeting, the "Budapest Open Access Initiative," was made public in February 2002 (Bailey, 2006). The initiative received \$3 million funding support from a philanthropist George Soros, the founder of OSI (Sathyanarayana, 2008). The *Public Library of Science* received a \$9 million grant from the *Moore Foundation* for open access (OA) publishing and announced its first two open-access journals on December 17, 2002 (Seber, 2009). Gradually, many institutions, organizations, societies, foundations, individual and commercial publishers joined the movement. The leading publishers like *Springer*, *Nature*, *Oxford*, *Cambridge*, *Elsevier*, *Taylor & Francis* and *Sage* also launched the open access journals. The Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) was established on 14 October 2008 (www.oaspa.org) in response to long-time informal discussions among open access publishers and aims to represent

the interests of open access journals publishers globally. This provides a vehicle for all organizations involved in open access publishing to share their experiences and develop common good practices.

The idea of creating a comprehensive directory of open access journals was discussed at the *First Nordic Conference on Scholarly Communication in Lund/Copenhagen* (<http://www.lub.lu.se/ncsc2002>). The Directory of Open Access Journals was launched by the Lund University on May 12, 2003, with funding from the Open Society Institute and the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) (Seber, 2009). In June 2004, the Open Society Institute (OSI) funded \$1,299,018 (USD) to support open-access projects that included developing the 'Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)', converting a 'Subscription-Based Journal to Open Access' and 'Guide to Launch a New Open Access Journal' (Guerrero, 2004). The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) service covers free, full text, quality-controlled scientific and scholarly journals. The DOAJ includes journals published by the not-for-profit open access journal publishers and all contents are freely available without delay (e.g. no embargo period) to the end-user. The publishing models of journals rely on significant donations from private foundations, institutional support and from those authors or institutions who can afford to make some payment towards the cost of publication. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) covers all subjects from acoustics to zoology and the present study will focus on the journal of religious studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growth and development of the open access scholarly publishing have been one of the success stories of the Internet and the World Wide Web. Falk reported that there were only five journals offering open access mode to their contents in 1992 and the number reached to 1200 in 2004 (Falk, 2004). The Ulrich Directory of Periodicals listed 24,263 journals published by 9,970 publishers in which 229 publishers deal with both open access and traditional access journals and 996 open access journals are published by them (Frantsvag, 2010). McVeigh evaluated the number of open access journals from region perspective in the ISI citation databases. The study brought out a striking result. Nearly 15% of the covered titles from Asia-Pacific are available as open access, and over 40% of the titles from Central or South America are open access journals. In contrast, open access journals from North American and Western Europe comprise 1.5% and 1.1%, respectively, of the total coverage from those regions (McVeigh, 2004). Lone, Rather, Shah (2008) found that the top five countries in terms of the number of journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) were USA, Brazil, UK, Spain, and Germany. India ranked number 7 on the list, well ahead of the developed countries such as China, Australia, and Japan.

Kaufman (2005) conducted a comprehensive investigation on open access journals of various archives including the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and revealed that there were only 248 journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) in all disciplines in which 45 percent of them were in science and technology, 34 percent in medicine, 10 percent in the social sciences, and 7 percent in the arts and humanities. The study also depicted that the typical DOAJ journal published just 41 articles per year. The study further depicted that most of the full open access journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) were published by commercial publishers (54.8%), followed by not-for-profit associations (14.5%) and academic departments (12.9%) respectively. The study also confirmed that 47% percent of DOAJ journals charged publication fees to authors or their institutions. Walters and Linvill (2011) examined the characteristics of 663 open access journals in biology, computer science, economics, history, medicine, and psychology and revealed a great variation in the size of open access journals; the

largest publishes more than 2,700 articles per year, but half publish 25 or fewer. The results also depicted that just 29 percent of open access journals charge publication fees and the number of such journals is higher in the fields of biology and medicine. They also depicted that the open access journal landscape is greatly influenced by a few key publishers in which 28 percent commercial, 32 percent university, and 35 percent society/non-profit. Coming to humanities and social sciences, little growth is depicted in comparison to science and technology. Hu (2012) identified that among the 2960 scholarly journals indexed by the Chinese National Knowledge Information (CNKI) database in the humanities and social sciences, 147 journals offered open access. Rufai, Gul, and Shah (2011) conducted a study to identify the open access journals in library and information science. A total of 144 open access journals in the field of library and information science were obtained from the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Ulrichsweb.com and J-Gate. Among these, 32 journals are indexed by all databases while 29 titles are indexed only by Directory of Open Access Journals, 11 only by Ulrichsweb.com & 16 by Open J-gate. The 144 open access library and information science journals were published from 37 countries in which maximum (45) titles were published in the United States (31.25%), followed respectively by 12 in Brazil (8.33%) and 10 in Spain (6.95%). The researchers also found that universities are the leading publishers of open access journals which published 55 titles, accounting to 38.19 per cent of the total, followed by library associations and research centres/institutes with 32 (22.22%) and 22 (15.28%) titles respectively. When it comes to the content language(s), 72.92 per cent of journals (105) are unilingual, 19.44 per cent as bilingual (28), 4.17 titles (6) in three languages, 2.78 per cent titles (4) in four languages and a single title (0.69%) is published in more than four languages. Loan (2014) examined the publishing trends of the Open Access (OA) journals in the field of education, available in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The findings show that a maximum number of journals (567) listed in the DOAJ is published in education; from the United States (120, i.e., 21.16%); and during the first decade (2001-10) of the 21st century (393, i.e., 69.31%). The linguistic assessment shows that the OA education journals are published in 32 different languages and English is the principal language adopted by the 75.84% (430) of journals. The results also reveal that the majority of the education journals (496, i.e., 87.48%) don't charge any publication fee from the authors and still 100% of them have maintained their continuity. In another study, Bjornshauge (2011) reported that the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) listed 7300 plus open access journals published from more than 115 countries by 2985 publishers. The study also revealed that 29 percent (2040) of journals accepted author processing charges whereas 71 percent (5063) didn't demand such charges. The author processing charges were highly demanded by journals published from Africa (60%) followed by North America (44%) and minimum by journals published from South America (7%). Loan, Refhat, and Asmat (2015) conducted a study to point out the publishing trends of the open access business and economics journals available in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The findings show that 607 business and economics journals are listed in the DOAJ and are published from the 67 countries of the world. The maximum number of journals (88, 14.50%) is published from Brazil, and during the first decade (2001-2010) of the 21st century (382, 62.93%). The linguistic assessment shows that the open access business and economics journals are mostly monolingual (405, 66.72%) and the majority of these are published in the English language (498, 82.04%). The results also reveal that the majority of the business and economics journals (415, 68.37%) doesn't charge publication fees to authors whereas almost one-fourth (147, 24.22%) of the journals demand article processing charges. Solomon and Bjork (2012) also reported that as on August 2011, 1,825 journals (26%) listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals that

charged author processing charges (APCs) whereas rest didn't charge any publication fee to authors.

A sizeable literature is available all over the world on open access journals in general and the DOAJ in particular. The results reveal that presently the open access journals are published from various regions and countries in all subject areas and in almost all influential world languages. However, more journals are published in the science and technology disciplines than the social sciences and humanities. The present study will be a step forward to study the open access scholarly journals in religious studies.

RESEARCH DESIGN

a) Problem Statement

Religion plays a very important role in our lives as it acts as a light to guide people through the tunnels of darkness. Without religion or spirituality, it is impossible to seek answers to many confusing questions in the world. A major portion of any religion like Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam is based on the same basic values and principles. Every religion teaches its followers to choose right over wrong, good over evil, just over unjust, truth over lies, and live in peace and harmony in the world. A look at some of the most ancient and beautiful buildings of the world have a religious significance. Ancient tombs, monasteries, temples, churches, synagogues, mosques and gurdwaras account for some of the wonders of the world. Holy wars have been waged and lives have been lost all for the sake of religion. Religion is treated more important than money, power, position, relationships, and property. Keeping the significance of the religion in view, scholars study/conduct research on various religious issues and problems in order to search the truth. These research findings are communicated through various channels and journals especially open access, are considered as the best vehicles for transferring the first-hand information. Therefore, the present study is a very important step for studying the scholarly publishing trends in the religious studies.

b) Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the paper is to study the publishing trends of the open access scholarly journals in religious studies through various parameters based on religion, country, language, growth rate, publishing bodies, author processing charges and quality control measures.

c) Scope and limitations of the Study

The study does not explore the whole World Wide Web, but only the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and therefore, figures don't represent the actual number of the open access scholarly journals in religious studies, but merely journals listed in the DOAJ. Hence the findings should be cautioned.

d) Methodology

The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is considered as the best source of information about OA journals. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) was accessed during the month of December 2017 to collect the data. Data was later presented in tabular forms and analyzed using the quantitative techniques to reveal findings in accordance with desired objectives.

DATA ANALYSES

1. Religion-wise information

The results reveal that most of the open access journals (76.47%) accept research papers, articles; book reviews etc. on all religions whereas 17.65% journals have focused on Islam, 3.36% on

Christianity, 1.68% on Judaism and 0.84% on Buddhism respectively (Table 1). There is no journal on Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, etc. The efforts need to be taken to create and register journals on these religions in the DOAJ as well. It will help to know the actual message of these religions through the lens of the religious experts. Moreover, the common message of peace and human values will be spread to the scholarly community.

Table 1: Religion-wise Journals

S.NO.	Religion	Number	Percentage
1.	Islam	21	17.65
2.	Christianity	04	3.36
3.	Judaism	02	1.68
4.	Buddhism	01	0.84
5.	Hinduism	00	00
6.	Sikhism	00	00
7.	Jainism	00	00
8.	Shivism	00	00
9.	Zoroastrianism	00	00
10.	Religions (All)	91	76.47
Total		119	100

2. Country-wise information

Till date, 27 countries have contributed 119 open access journals in religious studies. Among these, the maximum of journals is published in Indonesia (21, 17.65%), followed by Brazil (14, 11.77%), Colombia (11, 9.25%), Poland (10, 8.41%) and Spain (9, 7.56%) respectively (Table 2). No religious journal is registered in the DOAJ published in Indian languages especially Hindi and Urdu.

Table 2: Country-wise Journals in Religious studies

S. No.	Country	Number	Percentage
1.	Indonesia	21	17.65
2.	Brazil	14	11.77
3.	Colombia	11	9.25
4.	Poland	10	8.41
5.	Spain	9	7.56
6.	Italy	6	5.04
7.	USA	5	4.20
8.	Argentina	5	4.20
9.	Turkey	5	4.20
10.	Chile	4	3.36
11.	Germany	4	3.36
12.	Romania	4	3.36
13.	Iran	3	2.52
14.	South Africa	3	2.52
15.	Mexico	2	1.68
16.	Switzerland	2	1.68
17.	Austria	1	0.84

18.	Canada	1	0.84
19.	Czech Republic	1	0.84
20.	Finland	1	0.84
21.	France	1	0.84
22.	Ireland	1	0.84
23.	Malaysia	1	0.84
24.	Peru	1	0.84
25.	Serbia	1	0.84
26.	UK	1	0.84
27.	Venezuela	1	0.84
Total	27	119	100

3. Publisher wise information

The publisher wise information reveals that 119 religious journals are published by 114 publishers in which the maximum journals are published by the academic institutions especially universities (Table 3).

Table 3: Publisher-wise Journals in Religious studies

S. No.	Publisher	Number	Percentage
1.	Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika	02	1.68
2.	University of Isfahan	02	1.68
3.	Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya	02	1.68
4.	Universidad de Chile	02	1.68
5.	Pontificia Universidade Católica de São Paulo	02	1.68
6.	Pabst Science Publishers	02	1.68
7.	De Gruyter Open	02	1.68
8.	Others (1) each	105	88.24
Total	114	119	100

4. Language-wise information

The open access religious journals are published in 17 different languages. English is the principal language adopted by the 79 (66.39%) journals followed by Spanish (48, 40.34%) and Portuguese (25, 21.01%) and French (21, 17.65%) and German (19, 15.97%), respectively (Table 4).

Table 4: Language-wise Journals in Religious studies

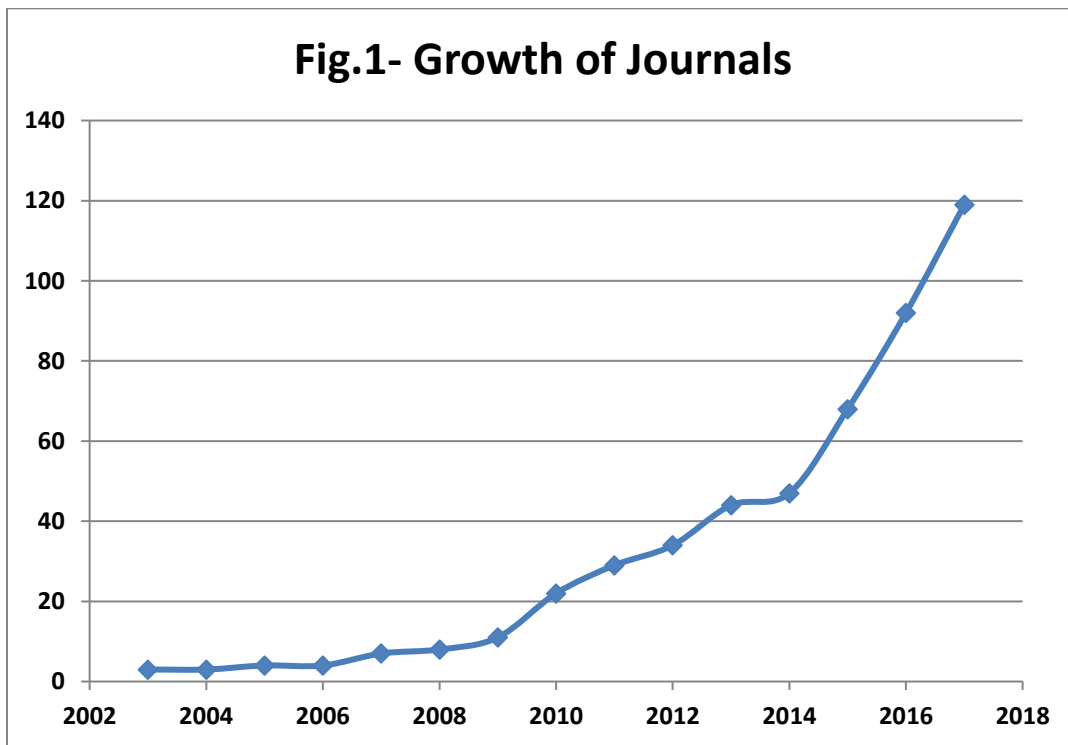
S.NO.	Language	Number	Percentage
1.	English	79	66.39
2.	Spanish	48	40.34
3.	Portuguese	25	21.01
4.	French	21	17.65
5.	German	19	15.97
6.	Indonesian	16	13.45
7.	Italian	13	10.92
8.	German	12	10.08
9.	Polish	9	7.56
10.	Arabic	8	6.72
11.	Turkish	5	4.20

12.	Persian	3	3.31
13.	Czech	1	0.82
14.	Hebrew	1	0.82
15.	Kurdish	1	0.82
16.	Russian	1	0.82
17.	Serbian	1	0.82
Total Languages = (17)			

Note: Journals were multi-lingual and hence percentage and total will vary

5. Growth of journals

The open access journals in religion have started from 3 journals in 2003 and since then have continuously accelerated the speed of publication. Presently 119 journals are registered in the DOAJ and most of them have adopted open access publishing model since 2010 (Fig 1).



6. Publication fee- wise information

The present study depicts that the majority of the religious journals (107, 89.92%) doesn't charge the publication fee to authors whereas 8 journals demand publication fee from the authors and 4 journals (3.36%) don't provide any information (Table 5).

Table 5: Publication fee-wise Journals in Religious Studies

S.NO.	Publication fee	Number	Percentage
1.	Yes	8	6.72
2.	No	107	89.92
3.	Information missing	4	3.36
Total		119	100

7. Quality control measures

All the journals adopt review process of the articles before publication in the journal in which the majority of the journals applies ‘Double-blind peer review’ (65, 54.62%) followed by ‘Blind peer review’ (27, 22.69%) and ‘peer review’ (19, 15.97%) respectively. Very few journals (3, 2.52%) adopt ‘Editorial review’ process before publication (Table 6).

Table 6: Quality Control measures of Journals in Religious Studies

S.NO.	Peer review process	Number	Percentage
1.	Double-blind peer review	65	54.62
2.	Blind peer review	27	22.69
3.	Peer review	19	15.97
4.	Editorial review	03	2.52
Total		119	100

DISCUSSION

The research journals are available on almost all religions of the world through open access mode. The need is to create awareness among the religious scholars for their optimum utilization. However, the journals officials also need to be cautious in selecting the papers. Only those papers need to be included which can be helpful in achieving peace and harmony in the global family and avoid papers which can be disastrous for the world peace. Moreover, Islam is the most preferred choice of the majority of the journals for publishing papers followed by Christianity. The journals authorities need to be cautious in including articles to maintain the real reputation of these journals. These journals shouldn't become the propaganda platforms for the focused religions.

The maximum of journals is published in Indonesia followed by Brazil. The other countries must join hands to speed up the research process in religious studies and share the findings with their global partners through open access platforms on all branches of knowledge. Further, the open access religious journals are mostly contributed by various publishers around the world. Only seven publishers have contributed more than two journals each and rest contributes only one journal each. The other publishers of the world also need to come forward and contribute in this field for the service of humanity.

The open access journals have taken the speed in the 21st century after the global open access movement was started in the Budapest. The need is to create more journals in the open access mode to overcome the financial barrier between user and information. The majority of the journals are published in English. This is a very good step as the English is considered as Lingo Franco (international Language) and the majority of the people are able to understand the English language as well. The journals which aren't available in the English language also need to create an English version in order to reach the more people.

Only a few journals in the religious studies demand author processing charges. However, it is a debatable question that who should pay the author processing charges- author, its institution or any funding agency like University Grants Commission. The author/researcher uses its mind, time and labour to generate the new knowledge for the benefit of the whole global community and obviously, an author shouldn't pay from its own pocket. The institutions or funding agencies should come forward to support the author as well as open access journals and in return, these institutions will get free access to the scholarly information for their academicians.

These journals adopt a formalized process of peer-review prior to publication. Peer-review is basically a quality control and quality improvement mechanism. Typically, the editors of the

journals request subject experts (reviewers) in the relevant field to review the papers. The reviewers mostly consist of a small group of subject experts (qualified peers) recognized by the journal. Later, the reviewers submit a detailed report of the paper along with a recommendation to reject, accept or improve the paper based on the suggestions. This process helps not only checking the quality of paper; but improving the quality as well.

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