



One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) Initiative: SWOT Analysis

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One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) initiative, launched by the Indian government, intends to democratize access to global research by centralizing subscription services across India irrespective of locations and institutions. The purpose of this paper is to examine the ONOS initiative and its implementation from a variety of perspectives to address challenges such as bridging the digital divide, closing digital resource gaps, eliminating educational disparities, removing linguistic barriers, and minimizing financial barriers, particularly between urban and rural areas. The ONOS draws mixed reactions, resulting in debates about its worth and praise for its benefits. The methodology used in this study is SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to address the internal and external factors driving ONOS implementation methods and make recommendations for future actions.

Findings indicate that the SO (Maxi-Maxi) strategy leverages ONOS's benefits to ensure equity and inclusivity, cover educational gaps, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, open access (OA), and research visibility. The WO (Mini-Maxi) strategy prioritizes high-quality journal subscriptions, combines research databases, and improves resource efficiency to bridge academic research gaps and advance digital literacy programs. The ST (Maxi-Mini) strategy combats external threats like content monopolization and growing costs by utilizing ONOS's capabilities while ensuring multidisciplinary research and worldwide democratic access. The WT (Mini-Mini) strategy minimizes internal vulnerabilities by addressing financial oversight, resource quality, and approaches to external problems, including predatory journals, infrastructural limitations, legal risks, and equity. This article offers useful strategies for publishers, academics, and policymakers to further the development of the ONOS for long-term viability.

Keywords: One Nation One Subscription (ONOS); SWOT Analysis; SWOT Matrix; Academic Research; Open Access (OA)

1. Introduction

The mission of Self-reliant India (Atmanirbhar Bharat) promotes Indian academic research in the global publishing market under the theme of 'local for global'. This mission benefits a variety of sectors including the quaternary sector of education, research and development. India's higher education system is one of the world's largest, with over 43.3 million students enrolled in 2021–2022 and a target of 50% enrollment by 2035¹. As of today, more than 1100 universities, including centrally funded technical and research institutions, provide great potential for improving research accessibility and strengthening India's academic research ecosystem. Most of these institutions have cutting-edge technology, sophisticated laboratories, instructional aids, interactive panels, smart boards, and a state-of-the-art library with computers, digital resources, internet, Wi-Fi access, CCTV surveillance, and so on. The prospects have elevated these institutions to the world arena, establishing India as a global leader (Viswa

guru) in the academic research scene to achieve self-reliance.

As part of India's self-reliant mission, the government has launched the ONOS initiative that promotes the Indian academic and research ecosystem by providing digital resources through a centralizing academic subscription service at affordable costs to all educational institutions in India. Nevertheless, a few challenges such as digital infrastructure and internet connectivity, linguistic inequality, digital literacy, and the financial status of the institutions across India in both urban and rural areas, have a significant impact. Furthermore, divergent public, publishers, and critics have raised a few concerns about the ONOS initiative regarding limited resources and publisher participation, OA publishing models, funding for Article Processing Charges (APCs), and copyright and licensing.

Despite the challenges, India has made great strides in expanding digital resources and inclusive access to institutions by investing huge funds through ONOS.

It also reduces global dependence on costly foreign resources and their subscription conditions. Instead, it encourages domestic publishing and promotes OA journals by capping APCs. OA is one of the lucrative publishing models that essentially do business globally and disseminate information publicly. Ultimately, the ONOS should improve scientific curiosity, confidence, commitment, and capacity by offering digital infrastructure, resources, inclusive access and national digital advocacy among educational institutions in alignment with India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020), Academic and Research Network (ANRF 2023), and the Viksit Bharat 2047.

2. ONOS: History

The ONOS initiative was first incorporated into India's fifth draft of the Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy (STIP) in 2020. The launch, which was initially planned in April 2023 with 70 publishers to ease the exorbitant costs of accessing scholarly resources and academic publications, ultimately excluded more than half of the original publishers. Science Europe's 'Plan S,' which attempts to foster OA and cover publication costs, is comparable to this scheme and similar initiatives in other countries². However, India chose to negotiate directly with global publishers rather than join Europe's Coalition S (Plan S).

The ONOS is promising India's inclusive and sustainable academic research ecosystem by reducing

cost and improving the accessibility of scholarly materials. The ONOS policy, which was approved by the Union Cabinet on 25 November 2024, will benefit more than 6,500 institutions and boost user engagement from 56.7 lakh to 177.82 lakh in its first phase. From the social sciences and humanities to STEM, the program aggregates access to over 13,119 e-journals from 30 leading worldwide publishers. Over three years (2025–2027), the government has sanctioned around Rs. 6,000 crore for ONOS under a new Central Sector Scheme (Figure 1). These e-journals will be available through a national subscription service operated by the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), providing a centralized, user-friendly digital platform for academic content³.

With its staged strategy, ONOS ensures nationwide coverage while increasing awareness of research in higher education institutions by resolving access gaps, providing affordability, and promoting academic diversity. It will need to come up with strategies to work with a greater range of publishers, promote reasonable pricing, and provide access to high-quality research while reducing reliance on foreign influences and avoiding potentially predatory journals. The primary objective of regional awareness campaigns (IEC) will be to increase awareness of ONOS in tier-2 and tier-3 universities. Both the ANRF and government agencies will monitor the use of ONOS to ensure the project's success. The objectives are to create a more affordable, accessible, and inclusive

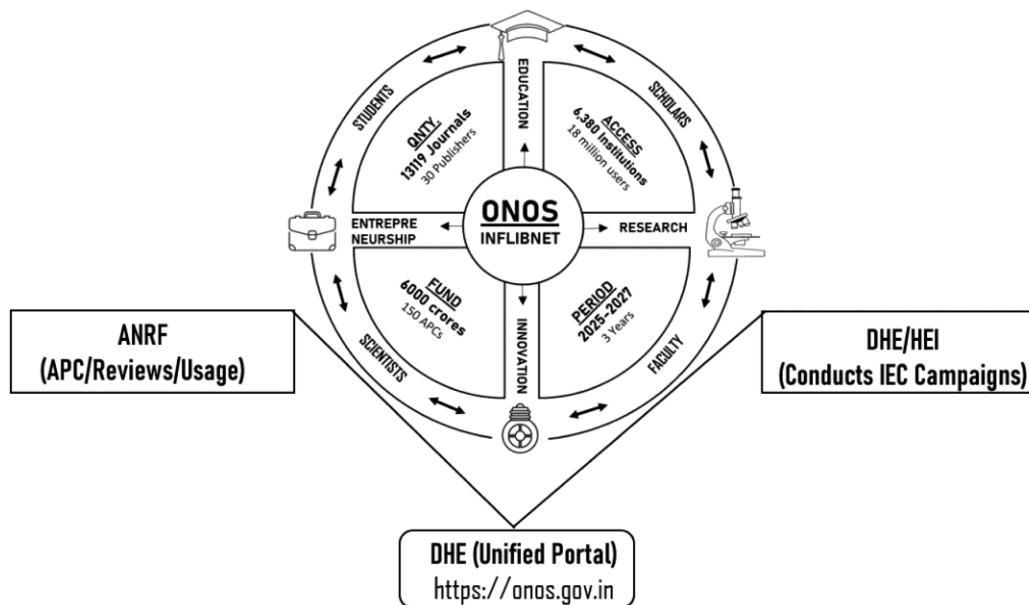


Fig. 1 — ONOS: Overview

research ecosystem, democratize education for marginalized communities, and further national research goals. The NEP 2020, which emphasizes research and innovation in higher education, is supported by the government's strategy for ONOS and aligns with the broader goals of "Viksit Bharat@2047." ONOS also supports the Prime Minister's appeal for "Jai Anusandhan," which promotes multidisciplinary research across India.

3. ONOS: Perception

Public, authors, and publishers views of ONOS have underlined possible advantages as well as difficulties; academics and critics often debate its value. If this initiative is carried out with a clear objective, it can still be beneficial even with conflicting feedback.

3.1. ONOS Public Perception

The public's reaction to the ONOS program has shown both hope and cynicism. ONOS wants to democratize scholarly knowledge by giving fair access to academic resources all over India, ignoring an institution's capacity or financial stability. ONOS wants to reduce the cost of APCs and scientific journal subscriptions by including subscriptions into a national model, thus increasing access to research. The first phase emphasized creating library consortia to reduce costs and promote OA. The second phase aims to expand access to scientific publications nationwide for both institutions and individuals. Since, the initiative's implementation on 01 January 2025, it has faced challenges related to sustainability, perpetual rights and preservation. The public is still divided on this issue. Proponents of ONOS view it as a way to improve access for smaller and rural institutions, particularly in low-income areas, using collective bargaining. Many, though, doubt whether the centralised model can satisfy the various demands of India's large educational system. Middle class cities like Tier-2 and Tier-3 have inadequate digital infrastructure, funds and marginalise small and regional content providers. Given the Rs 6,000 crore (\$715 million) spent on overseas journal subscriptions, which have ambiguous agreements and limited archiving rights for three years, the long-term viability of the initiative could be in doubt. ONOS's success will be determined by its ability to handle these issues and satisfy the various requirements of the Indian research community. The opinion of the people will have a big impact on its

long-term performance.

3.2. ONOS: Author Perception

From an author's point of view, ONOS has advantages and disadvantages. Authors struggle with journal quality concerns, peer review delays, high publishing costs, restricted distribution control, and pressure to publish in renowned journals. Authors sometimes surrender their copyright to publishers for a publication. Institutional budget cuts, high costs, APCs, and unpaid labour create more difficulties for researchers in low-resource nations. Gold OA journals' high APCs present a significant obstacle for Indian researchers that ONOS does not fully address. Hybrid subscription journals aggravate the problem by raising the price of OA publishing.

Multinational publishers benefit from publicly supported work, while high OA prices further worsen inequality⁴. Because APCs and subscription fees are frequently unaffordable, ONOS can assist researchers in developing countries with their financial burdens. To help authors become more visible and contribute to international research, the initiative might look into forming alliances with publishers. Even though ONOS advocates for equitable access, problems with copyright and publishing expenses still exist. Self-archiving repositories and other OA techniques provide more accessibility and control. Although it increases accessibility, Harvard's 2008 policy raises questions regarding the value of journals by permitting scholars to deposit their work in OA repositories⁵. Preprint services like VeriXiv and fair OA strategies are supported by the Gates Foundation. Indian journals must make significant investments in infrastructure, editing procedures, and global visibility in order to support Indian authors and fortify the scholarly publishing system.

3.3. ONOS: Publisher Perception

In the global market, publishers often prioritise competition and reputation. They invest huge funds for publishing and disseminating scientific knowledge, including copyediting, publishing, managing platforms, etc. They are always greedy to maintain their reputation while competing globally. Exorbitant prices, author-pay structures, and a focus on quantity over substance. It can be a result of financial needs and business strategies that occasionally prioritize profit over quality, pushing publishers to look for other sources of income. Without substantial financial support, OA adoption is

difficult.

For their predatory journals, some publishers employed dishonest paywalled strategies. Retractions, "paper mills," and phony research can damage publishers' reputations⁶. This discrepancy restricts OA opportunities while assisting publishers in maintaining profit margins. OA models are difficult for traditional publishers to adopt, requiring new strategies, collaborations, and financial support. Publishers worry that ONOS's fixed revenue model may hinder expansion, cut manpower, and limit job possibilities in India's publishing business⁷. Publisher's primary concern is transferring copyright from authors and gaining control over work without always consulting those raising questions about authors' right. In order to support the ONOS initiative, publishers must guarantee resource accessibility for paid subscriptions, sign long-term agreements, and maintain back-file access within active subscriptions. Establishing copyright periods for works, managing APCs for OA journals, and limiting annual subscription increases are the goals of ONOS. Since maintaining the integrity of digital resources over time requires constant monitoring, content preservation is a significant challenge⁸. The long-term availability of many DOI-linked papers is jeopardized by improper storage.

Additionally, ONOS plans to define off-campus access technologies for e-resources and define jurisdiction in legal disputes. However, questions concerning the agreement's efficacy and conformity to stakeholder requirements are raised by its lack of transparency regarding specific terms and negotiation progress. Despite obstacles, the ONOS initiative has received strong support from the publishing community, including Springer Nature⁹. It aims to provide 18 million Indian researchers with equitable access to high-quality research, bridge the digital divide, and strengthen India's global academic presence.

4. ONOS: Criticism and Concerns

Despite its potential benefits, ONOS has received widespread criticism from many stakeholders. One major complaint is that it relies on subscription-based models instead of OA alternatives. According to Clarivate's Web of Science, more than half of scientific papers are now OA, making ONOS' subscription model outmoded and inefficient¹⁰⁻¹¹. Critics contend that the effort wastes taxpayer money by paying for content that is already free. Nimodia

highlights how Egypt and Uruguay, with World Bank assistance, successfully established OA models that benefit society while raising concerns about the longstanding viability of associated expenses¹². Critics argue that the subscription approach may raise public spending without providing significant advantages, while also ignoring the need to improve India's research infrastructure. As US universities scrap big deals with major scientific publishers, India's ONOS initiative seems flawed and outdated¹³. ONOS has only 30 publishers, a considerable decrease from the original target of 70, which is cause for concern. The reduction highlights delays and conflicts during talks. Chakraborty et al. (2020) suggested that ONOS should broaden its membership and ensure equitable pricing to prevent huge publishers from dominating the academic content market¹⁴. Internet access and digital literacy are significant challenges for ONOS, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities¹⁵. Centralized control of the ONOS may reduce institutional autonomy, particularly for rural or underfunded universities, increasing access inequities. Critics contend that by diverting funds from essential research, the initiative may limit university flexibility, particularly in underdeveloped areas. The long-term viability of ONOS and its capacity to meet the demands of the Indian academic community are called into question by these difficulties.

Concerns regarding APCs' OA publishing policy are raised by ONOS's subscription model, which could result in "double-dipping." Because of needless inflation, this approach might result in higher costs for institutions and researchers. PLOS and other publishers are worried that researchers might turn back to paywalled publishing if OA solutions are not adopted¹⁶. India's competitiveness in global scholarship is hampered by the opaqueness of APC allocation, which raises costs and restricts access to research abroad. Preventing intellectual content monopolization and sustaining funding for OA publishing are ongoing challenges. The effort has the potential to improve India's quality and worldwide competitiveness, but success requires significant collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, and international publishers. Madalli (2025) suggests that India should invest in OA publication, reconsider research evaluation, promote data-sharing, and improve digital literacy to establish a national open science environment that fosters collaboration, equity, and innovation¹⁷.

5. Methodology

This study employs SWOT analysis to evaluate the internal and external factors of the ONOS using both primary and secondary sources. This method was initially popularized by Ken Andrews at Harvard Business School in the late 1950s¹⁸. Although useful, the SWOT analysis has limitations like as simplicity, language confusion, and failure to reflect complex corporate contexts¹⁹. Inadequate critical thinking can lead to inaccurate representations of organizational aspects²⁰.

Despite its limitations, the SWOT method is a widely used strategic tool to distil organizational strengths and weaknesses into core opportunities and core threats²¹. Following the SWOT analysis, a matrix is used such as SO (Maxi-Maxi), WO (Mini-Maxi), ST (Maxi-Mini), and WT (Mini-Mini) to formulate strategies. This method delivers practical insights to help stakeholders such as academics, administrators, and policymakers make better decisions for the development of the ONOS in the academic and research ecosystem.

6. ONOS: SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis is a critical tool to address the ONOS initiative. The SWOT analysis consists of four quadrants: internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats (Table 1). This article uses SWOT analysis to identify critical factors influencing ONOS adoption and execution, giving valuable insights for strategic planning and decision-making.

7. ONOS: SWOT Matrix

The SWOT matrix (Table 2) is a widely used strategy development tool²². This strategic framework helps the government or organization to identify their internal and external factors and make the right decisions for the ONOS adoption and implementation (Figure 2). As highlighted by Pandya in 2017, this kind

of strategic planning is required for making sound decisions²³. ONOS's strategy roadmap outlines ways to leverage internal strengths, capitalize on external opportunities, correct weaknesses, and mitigate dangers.

7.1. SO (Maxi-Maxi)

The ONOS is maximizing its internal strengths to seize external opportunities:

- Implementation of centralized resource subscription with affordable costs to narrow down knowledge and institutional gaps, and elevate deprived institutions across India.
- Inclusive and equitable access to a variety of high-impact journals boosts diversity, global collaboration and multidisciplinary research.
- Promotion of OA publishing to gain optimum visibility while slowly minimizing reliance on subscriptions and exploring alternative models to address resource gaps and resource sharing.
- Stimulation of national digital literacy by accelerating advocacy and awareness efforts to align with India's national goals

7.2. WO (Mini-Maxi)

The ONOS is overcoming internal weaknesses to exploit external opportunities:

- Government aims to maximize national infrastructure including internet connectivity to reduce institutional inequities and geographical boundaries.
- Inclusion of research databases and tools improves collaboration and interdisciplinary research while reducing resource expenditures and gaps.

Table 2 — SWOT Matrix

		Internal Forces	
		Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
External Forces	Opportunities (O)	SO (Maxi-Maxi)	WO (Mini-Maxi)
	Threats (T)	ST (Maxi-Mini)	WT (Mini-Mini)

Table 1 — ONOS: SWOT Internal and External Forces

Internal Forces	
<i>Strengths- Positive</i>	<i>Weaknesses-Negative</i>
a) Centralised funding for unified resources	a) Lack of national infrastructure and connectivity
b) Inclusive and equitable access	b) Overspending on e-resources
c) Promotion of institutional research	c) Lack of e-databases and tools subscription
d) Aligning with India's national goals	d) Lack of APC allocation strategy for OA publications
External Forces	
<i>Opportunities – Positive</i>	<i>Weaknesses - Negative</i>
a) Address institutional inequities and resource gaps	a) Raising journal prices, reliance on global over local subscriptions
b) Collaboration and interdisciplinary research	b) Content monopoly and predatory publishing practices
c) Promotion of OA for global visibility	c) Copyright infringement and legal risks
d) National advocacy and awareness for digital literacy	d) Lack of Assistive technology and linguistic barriers

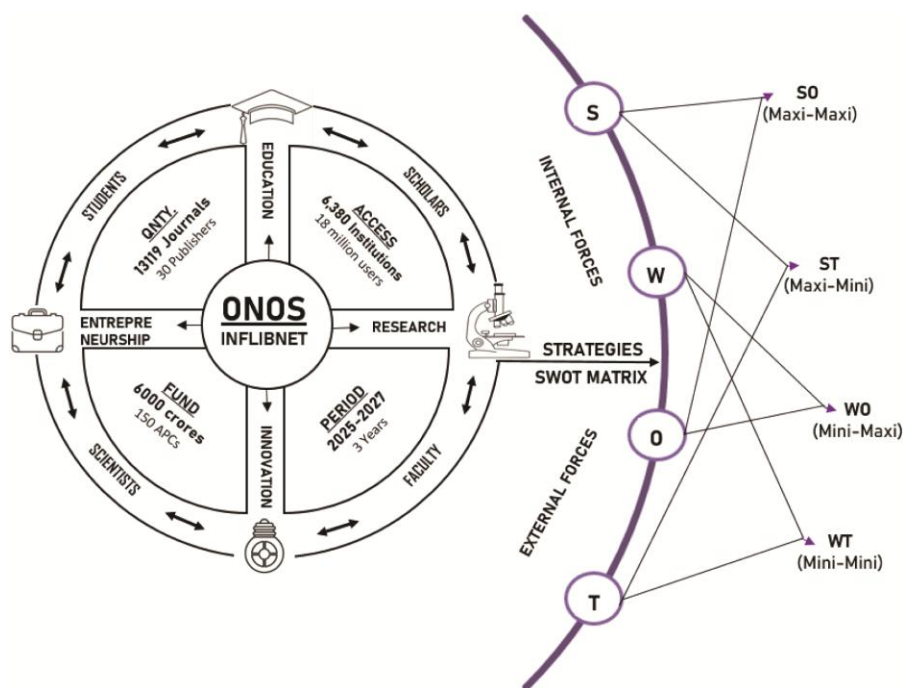


Fig. 2 — ONOS: SWOT Matrix

- Exploration of research grants to publish Indian research in OA journals with capping APCs to ensure transparency and promotion of openness.
- Efforts to maximize national digital literacy campaigns through advocacy and awareness across India.

7.3. ST (Maxi-Mini)

The ONOS is leveraging internal strengths to counteract external threats:

- Offer negotiable and affordable subscriptions to combat rising costs and guarantee long-term access to research materials for institutions with limited funding
- To avoid legal issues and copyright violations to guarantee adherence to international standards, and align with both domestic and global trends.
- To avoid content monopolization and guarantee fair access for all institutions to protect against predatory publishing practices
- Inclusion and equitable access to Indian research by enabling assistive technologies and linguistics tools.

7.4. WT (Mini-Mini)

The ONOS is minimizing internal weaknesses to defend against external threats:

- Enabling the digital divide guarantees equitable participation across scholars and institutions in India.
- Prevent content monopolies and predatory journals by reducing reliance on foreign influence and better-negotiated subscription terms.
- Develop effective APC allocation procedures to lessen budgetary restrictions and slow down rising expenses.
- Establish strong governance and rules to address legal and copyright issues.

8. Conclusion

The Indian government commenced the ONOS initiative which aims to transform the higher education system by facilitating centralised subscriptions to knowledge resources at affordable costs allowing for exponential access to global knowledge. As a result, more than 6,500 institutions across the country have gained access to 13,119 publications from 30 international publishers for the period of a three-year investment of Rs. 6000 crore. This shift motivates Indian researchers to produce, access, and share interdisciplinary scientific knowledge leading to innovative works. Finding innovative work in multidisciplinary research might be challenging due to its complexity and quick scientific advancement²⁴.

Therefore, programs like ONOS encourage and support Indian institutions to conduct creative and diversified research to rank the country. This initiative is a key component of the Indian government's efforts to close the urban-rural divide, strengthen the knowledge economy, and increase scientific productivity. It promotes equity and reduces the digital divide by improving connectivity, infrastructure, and digital literacy. It also removes financial obstacles, promotes diversity, provides ongoing access to academic materials, and ensures long-term preservation. The platform offers trustworthy, up-to-date, and curated content for researchers while complying with copyright and license agreements and managing subscription fees.

However, issues remain to continue in enhancing cost-efficiency, increasing publisher engagement, and promoting OA publishing. OA publishing efforts can be strengthened through training, APC funding, and conversations with publishers. Universities and funding agencies should provide financial support, particularly to researchers in underdeveloped nations to encourage and promote OA publications. The goal of OA is to make scholarly content available to everyone. Increased faculty members' self-efficacy and resource access can boost OA publication rates. It is also beneficial for the researchers to stop using paywalled content when publishing in OA journals. OA raises visibility and citation rates, while copyright restrictions do not affect author-side distribution practices²⁵. ONOS should prioritise supporting capping APCs, getting rid of duplicate journal subscriptions, and encouraging local publishing to reduce reliance on external publishers and increase accessibility. India is aspiring to become a global leader in academic research through this ONOS initiative, which has assisted the nation in achieving its educational and research objectives despite obstacles.

From the study, it is observed that a SWOT analysis of ONOS indicates potential areas for expansion. The SO (Maxi-Maxi) strategy leverages ONOS's capabilities to address educational gaps, facilitate interdisciplinary research, centralize resources and promote OA while aligning with national educational goals. The WO (Mini-Maxi) plan focuses on premium journal subscriptions, integrates contemporary research databases, and establishes unambiguous APC regulations to enhance national digital literacy initiatives, close educational gaps, and

improve financial management. By utilizing its multidisciplinary research and financial resources to address external issues like content monopolization and growing costs, the ST (Maxi-Mini) strategy improves ONOS's competitiveness and resilience. Through better financial oversight, resource quality, and addressing external issues like predatory journals, infrastructure constraints, and legal hazards, the WT (Mini-Mini) approach seeks to guarantee long-term sustainability and equity. Despite advantages and challenges, this ONOS effort has shown the finest ability to meet its educational and research objectives. This is in line with the Atmanirbhar Bharat national vision where education is truly liberated and empowered and India strives to be a global leader in academic research.

9. Recommendations

- Equitable and inclusive access to global resources through an affordable centralized subscription service would progressively help in reducing institutional disparities and knowledge gaps to increase Indian research.
- Creation of a standardized setup for domestic publishing startups including OA publishing to work on diverse, regional content, digital platforms and services.
- Creation of research and development startups that offer research grants/funds to promote innovative research through high-quality publications, projects, patents, etc.
- Promotion of OA movement, policies and repositories and funding for APCs for OA publications and ensuring that public-funded research is made available soon after publication.
- Grant incentives and promotions for academics to boost collaboration, interdisciplinary research and grassroots-level creativity and innovation.
- Adhering to international standards and forming research partnerships helps to prevent predatory journal practices and legal concerns, while also ensuring inclusive regulations and equitable access to research.
- Promotion of national digital literacy through linguistic primacy, advocacy and awareness campaigns.

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