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Review Article

High Costs, Long Waits, and Ethical Dilemmas: A Review of Challenges in Academic Publishing

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ABSTRACT

The landscape of publication of research papers is becoming more and more challenging, especially in terms of the financial, temporal, and ethical aspects. These challenges are made worse by the expanding power of accrediting bodies and technological advancements like Artificial Intelligence (AI). Article Processing Charges (APCs) sometimes exceed the financial means of academics and researchers, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries. High submission volumes and peer-review bottlenecks cause lengthy publication timelines, which further complicate matters and cause uncertainty and delays in scholars' career advancement. Academic integrity is threatened by ethical issues like the improper use of AI tools, which also call into question the originality and creativity of research. This review draws upon insights from a curated body of recently published research papers to highlight structural injustices in academic publishing, their adverse effects on global research output, and the excessive pressure placed on faculty members to fulfill the requirements of accreditation agencies. To promote a more just and sustainable research ecosystem, this study suggests doable solutions, such as reforms in publishing economics, expedited peer-review procedures, and responsible AI use.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Academic Publishing, AI in Research, Article Processing Charges, Peer Review Challenges, Retraction.

JEL Codes: D63, F63, I23, O33.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic publishing has long been a vital part of the global professional development of scholars, the advancement of research across disciplines, and the diffusion of scientific knowledge. In the past, publishing scholarly work has been viewed as a way to add to the global knowledge base, enabling scholars to disseminate their findings, question preconceived notions, and promote scholarly dialogue. However, the process of writing a manuscript to publishing is difficult and has become more difficult in recent years due to many interrelated factors, such as pressures from institutions (to improve their institutional ranking and/or assessment scores), the high cost of publishing, the lengthy wait times for peer review and publication, and ethical quandaries that come up in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The accessibility and effectiveness of academic publishing are seriously hampered by these problems, which are made worse by the speed at which technology is changing.

Academic publishing is best understood through the lens of Knowledge Production Theory, which posits that scholarly outputs are socially, economically, and institutionally constructed.[1,2] This perspective views publishing not merely as the dissemination of knowledge but as a contested space shaped by shifting technical impacts, power dynamics, and economic motivations. The current publication ecosystem, including the dominance of high-impact journals, pressure to publish, and inequalities in access, reflects broader issues of academic capitalism.[3] Within this framework, publishing serves as a gatekeeping mechanism as well as a metric for resource allocation, faculty promotion, and institutional ranking.

Moreover, the integration of AI in academic writing and publishing introduces a new dimension to this framework, raising critical questions of epistemic accountability and algorithmic ethics.[4] Peer review bottlenecks, exploitative open access models, and ethical quandaries arising from AI-generated content highlight the necessity of reevaluating the normative principles that govern scholarly communication.[5,6] This review adopts a socio-technical systems approach to explore how these interwoven financial, temporal, and ethical forces reshape the global publishing landscape and affect the inclusivity, credibility, and sustainability of academic knowledge dissemination.

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This comprehensive review of the literature looks at how academic publishing is changing and highlights the difficulties that researchers encounter, especially in developing nations like India. The study examines three main areas by analyzing recent publications: (1) the cost of publishing in respectable journals; (2) the effects of long publication schedules; and (3) the moral dilemmas raised by academic writing technology such as AI. The review emphasizes how faculty members are under increasing pressure to publish in high-impact journals, frequently at considerable personal expense, due to accreditation requirements from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).[7,8] It examines the effects of Article Processing Charges (APCs), which are especially onerous for researchers in developing nations and range from $ 1,000 to $ 3,000.[9] The study also examines the challenges associated with lengthy publication schedules, which can span anywhere from one to two years, and their impact on academic careers and the dissemination of knowledge. It also looks into the phenomenon of article retractions and how it affects researchers.[10] Lastly, the review discusses the moral conundrums raised by ChatGPT and other AI tools in academic writing, taking into account both the possible advantages and hazards to the integrity of the research.[11] This review attempts to shed light on the intricate dynamics at work and offer pragmatic solutions for addressing this challenging terrain by combining these interrelated concerns.

A FEW ASPECTS OF METHODOLOGY

A complex web of interrelated factors affecting the dissemination of knowledge characterizes the current state of academic publishing. Publishing in respectable journals is more than just a professional obligation for faculty members at HEIs; it is frequently essential for career advancement, obtaining funding, and receiving institutional accreditation and ranking by agencies such as the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). The challenges facing academics are exacerbated by the increasing importance of indexing systems such as Web of Science and Scopus. In several cases, academicians and researchers experience a cycle of stress and frustration as a result of these systems, which not only decide the visibility and impact of scholarly outputs but also impose stringent requirements that could obstruct the publishing process.

In a time when technology is developing at a breakneck pace, academic publishing is changing dramatically. The primary objective of this review article is to critically analyze a few important issues that HEIs and scholars face. The emphasis is on the costs, lengthy publication schedules, and moral conundrums that plague the academic publishing industry, as well as the developing role of AI in resolving these problems. This means that, centred around the primary objective, this study addresses three important goals. The first goal is to present a thorough overview of the current problems in academic publishing, including the publication fees (including submission fees, APCs, etc.) the drawn-out peer-review procedures, and the moral conundrums brought on by problems like plagiarism, authorship disputes, and the accessibility of research findings. Second, the paper explores how AI is affecting academic publishing and how it can improve peer review, expedite procedures, and possibly allay ethical worries. To help academicians, researchers, institutions, and publishers deal with the challenges of academic publishing in this new era, the study provides a few viable recommendations and best practices (third goal). To improve practices, support policy decisions, and ultimately improve the integrity and accessibility of scholarly communication, this study attempts to contribute to the continuing discussion on academic publishing by addressing these important issues.

With an emphasis on the financial, temporal, and ethical aspects of academic publishing, especially in light of new technologies like AI, this study uses a methodical approach to identify, evaluate, and summarize the major issues.

The bibliographic search for this review was conducted between January 2024 and April 2025, ensuring the inclusion of the most current and relevant literature. A combination of academic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, Springer Link, ScienceDirect, and Taylor & Francis Online, was used for selecting articles. The scope was broadened by including reputable journals included in the ABDC list, as well as grey literature platforms such as SSRN and Google Scholar alerts to capture emerging discourse in the field. The search strategy employed specific keywords aligned with the study's core focus: "Academic Publishing," "AI in Research," "Academic Integrity," "Article Processing Charges," "Peer Review Challenges," and "Retraction." Preference was given to literature published from 2015 onward, particularly to ensure relevance to ongoing trends and developments in academic publishing. Select foundational or landmark studies, even prior to 2015, were included where necessary to provide historical grounding or to trace the evolution of critical issues. This comprehensive and time-bound approach ensured that the review reflects both the current realities and historical trajectory of key publishing challenges.

Following the above methodology, a total of 150 articles were initially retrieved from scholarly databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Springer Link, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, and Taylor & Francis Online, as well as grey literature from platforms such as Google Scholar and SSRN. The research strategy used a combination of Boolean terms related to APCs, predatory journals, AI use in publishing, peer review bias, academic publishing delays, and publication ethics. The selection process followed a two-phase screening:

- First, all titles and abstracts were screened for thematic relevance, resulting in the exclusion of 43 articles that were either duplicates or off-topic.
- Second, 107 full text articles were reviewed for methodological rigor, depth of discussion, and alignment with this paper's objectives. From this, 35 more articles were excluded due to insufficient academic value (e.g., opinion pieces, blog posts, or overly general discussion), resulting in a final set of 72 peer-reviewed articles that formed the foundation of this study.

To increase transparency and replicability of the literature selection process, a PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram is presented below (Figure 1), summarizing the identification, screening, and inclusion of reviewed studies.

The key inclusion criteria included:

- Publications between 2015 and 2025.
- Relevance to the themes of financial, ethical, or temporal challenges in academic publishing.
- Appearance in journals indexed in Web of Science, Scopus, etc.
- Demonstrated empirical depth or critical theoretical insight.

This multi-step filtration ensured that only methodologically sound and thematically relevant literature informed the study's arguments.

The thematic review of these articles focused on the following themes: (i) the cost of academic publishing; (ii) retractions and quality control in academic publishing; (iii) institutional pressures and accreditation requirements; and (iv) ethical considerations in the era of AI. To shed light on the systemic problems and suggest feasible solutions, this methodology ensures a thorough and objective synthesis of the literature. For greater clarity, the 72 reviewed articles were grouped thematically as follows:

- Financial burden in academic publishing: 15 articles (20.83%),
- Peer review and quality control: 14 articles (19.44%),
- Ethical challenges and predatory publishing: 13 articles (18.06%),
- AI tools and scholarly integrity: 10 articles (13.89%),
- Retractions and reputation: 8 articles (11.11%), and
- Pressure to publish: 12 articles (16.67%).

These groupings are reflected in the thematic structure of the paper and guided the synthesis of issues presented in subsequent sections.

Financial Burdens in Academic Publishing

This section, which explores the research issue, "financial burdens in academic publishing," reveals a shared concern about the growing financial burdens that the APCs model places on individual researchers and academicians, as well as on academic institutions. It explores the rising APCs, the disparities in APC pricing, and the resulting impacts on research equity and the sustainability of scholarly communication. Altogether, the research papers highlight the need for a more inclusive and financially viable academic publishing environment and call for a critical re-evaluation of the Open-Access (OA) publishing model to ensure fair and sustainable distribution of scholarly content.

Article Processing Charges (APCs) and Their Impact

By examining differences in APC pricing, the effects on academicians, researchers, institutional finance, and the changing market dynamics of OA publishing, the collective research highlights the increasing financial burden that APCs are placing on academic institutions. A study provides a foundational understanding of APCs for research-intensive universities in the USA and Canada.[12] The study reveals that the average APC for OA journals is slightly under $ 2,000, and for hybrid articles, it is about $ 3,000. This suggests that HEIs that support their faculty members in OA publications are making a sizable financial commitment. Of course, this institutional support is not available to everyone. Notably, this financial burden is not borne by many institutions, especially in developing and underdeveloped nations. Even in the case of funded projects, there is no provision for paying the APCs out of approved funds. As a result, faculty members and researchers bear the entire cost of these publications, which poses a serious obstacle to fair access to prestigious publishing opportunities. Another study expanded this viewpoint by analyzing various pricing strategies used in the OA landscape.[13] They observed that APC levels are influenced by language, publisher type, journal impact factor, and other factors, with for-profit publishers charging the highest fees.

A thorough examination of spending on APC at German institutions revealed an increasing trend in costs and a definite preference for fully OA journals over hybrid ones.[14] These findings are consistent with another research, which found a stronger correlation between APC pricing and journal impact for OA journals than for hybrid ones.[15] This emphasizes how APC pricing strategies are shaped by academic value and journal reputation. By breaking down the expenses of publishing academic papers, a paper questions the status quo.[16] It argues for a far more cost-effective system in stark contrast to the high APCs that many publishers charge. APC market development is examined by another study, stressing the need for a thorough

evaluation of different models to maintain the OA movement without placing an excessive financial burden on researchers and institutions.[8] Finally, two more studies provide insights into the burdens and trends of APCs over time.[17,18] These studies observed a notable increase in the average per-article but a slight increase in the average per-journal APC, indicating a preference for publishing in more costly journals. They also draw attention to the growing financial strains on academic institutions in the OA era by highlighting the dual financial burden that Canadian universities face as they manage rising APCs and subscription costs.

All these studies reveal the financial effects of APCs in academic publishing and suggest a review of pricing schemes to ensure the long-term and fair distribution of scholarly work.

The 'Pay-to-Publish' Model and Its Consequences

APCs' increasing prevalence and the trend towards OA publishing have drastically changed the academic publishing industry's financial environment, raising questions about research equity and the long-term viability of scholarly communication. It is projected that a substantial $ 1.06 billion expenditure on APCs to the five largest commercial publishers from 2015 to 2018, and this highlights the significant financial burden on authors and funders.[19] This model has made academic publishing a lucrative industry, with publishers making huge profits at the expense of the academic community.[20] APC funding sources differ among disciplines, and discipline-specific funding availability and journal impact factors are important considerations when developing APC pricing strategies.[21] It also expands on the idea of the total cost of publication by including subscription fees in addition to APCs. Furthermore, there is a significant rise in centrally managed APC payments, especially in response to changes in policy that support OA publishing. As hybrid journals are more expensive than fully OA journals, this shift has resulted in a significant increase in the financial burden on researchers, academicians, and academic institutions. It is argued that publishers' "big deal" bundles provide diminishing returns on their investment to academic libraries.[22] A decline in the percentage of journals cited by university researchers relative to the total number of subscribers supports this claim. As a result, the cost per cited journal has increased, underscoring the inadequacy of the current subscription models in the era of digitalization. Concerns about how high APCs affect research equity and career advancement are also raised by the experts.[23] They contend that the pay-to-publish model may worsen inequality within the academic community and obstruct the flow of knowledge.

These studies, as a whole, criticize the financial strains placed on academic publishing by the pay-to-publish model. They draw attention to the rising expenses, the effects on research equity, and the difficulties faced by researchers, academicians, and HEIs in meeting these financial commitments. To ensure sustainable and equitable dissemination of scholarly work, there is a need for reassessment of current OA policies and funding models.[24]

Economic Disparities in Global Academic Publishing

A study highlights the exclusion of diverse voices because of financial barriers and reveals notable economic disparities in academic publishing.[25] The financial difficulties in the South African publishing industry are highlighted by this study, especially in the field of gender-based violence research. It illustrates how government subsidy programs and article processing fees feed a cycle that favors academic institutions and the scholars they employ, marginalizing grassroots activists and independent local researchers in the process. It calls for a radical decolonization of the publishing ecosystem to address these injustices and foster a more inclusive knowledge production environment. This ecosystem not only perpetuates elitism and the monopolization of knowledge but also severely impedes the inclusion of diverse perspectives, particularly those from outside the academic sphere.

Research Gaps and Suggested Agenda

A lack of thorough investigation into the impacts of APCs on various stakeholders and the long-term viability of the current academic publishing model is highlighted by the literature review.[13,14,26]

Thorough research is required to analyze the differences in APCs among disciplines, especially interdisciplinary and emerging fields.[15]

There is an urgent need for research on alternative funding models that might minimize the financial strain on individual researchers and institutions, particularly those from underrepresented communities and low-income economies.[25]

Investigations into the long-term effects of the current publishing model on the inclusivity and diversity of scholarly communication are required for proposing more equitable frameworks.[23]

Quality Control and Retractions in Academic Publishing

The research issue, "quality control and retractions in academic publishing," is covered in this section. It reveals a complex landscape of rising retractions due to many reasons, such as misconduct, problems with data, and the shortcomings of the current editorial and peer review procedures. To improve the quality and reliability of scholarly publications, the results highlight the need for increased transparency, responsible authorship, and a comprehensive revision of the integrity assessment and peer review procedures. All of the reviewed studies support a multipronged strategy for academic publishing reform, stressing the need to address retractions' causes as well as their handling procedures to preserve the integrity of the research studies.

Causes and Frequency of Article Retractions

The review of papers on "article retractions" reveals a complex landscape in academic publishing, with a variety of reasons and increasing frequency over time. It is pointed out that the majority of retractions in research pertaining to schizophrenia occurred during the last ten years, with data issues being the most frequent reason.[27] Analysis of COVID-19 article retractions highlighted the variety of reasons for retractions, such as doubts regarding the validity of the data and duplicate publication.[28] A cross-disciplinary viewpoint was provided by a study demonstrating that the most common author-related reasons for retractions are plagiarism, faulty data, and data fabrication.[29] Finally, it is noted that most retracted publications in biomedical and life-science research are related to misconduct, especially fraud.[30] Collectively, these studies highlight the intricacy of quality control mechanisms in academic publishing and the importance of addressing the root causes of retractions to uphold research integrity.

Consequences of Retractions for Authors and Institutions

The studies emphasize the need for strong quality control procedures in academic publishing by highlighting the complex repercussions of retractions brought on by misconduct for both authors and institutions. Given the serious reputational risks involved, it is argued that editors with a history of misconduct should not be on editorial boards unless they demonstrate scholarly reform.[31,32] There is a significant deficiency in the thorough evaluation of impacted publications by institutions and publishers, which suggests a failure to protect publication integrity.[33] Retractions have the potential to significantly skew the body of evidence, and the scientific process can be further hampered by sluggish and disorganized correction efforts. It is therefore argued for a cultural shift toward admitting and correcting errors, arguing that the stigma attached to retractions prevents people from reporting errors.[34,35] On the other hand, it is stressed how crucial it is to stigmatize retractions brought on by misconduct to maintain research integrity.[36] Discussing the difficulties in clearing the medical literature after misconduct, the necessity of shared accountability among scientists was stressed.[37]

Together, these studies highlight the significant effects retractions have on authors' and institutions' credibility, arguing for more open, accountable, and proactive methods of handling retractions and promoting an integrity-based culture in academic publishing.

Improving Peer Review and Editorial Processes

The following papers' combined insights imply that poor quality control, insufficient engagement with peer review feedback, and opaque retraction practices compromise the efficacy and integrity

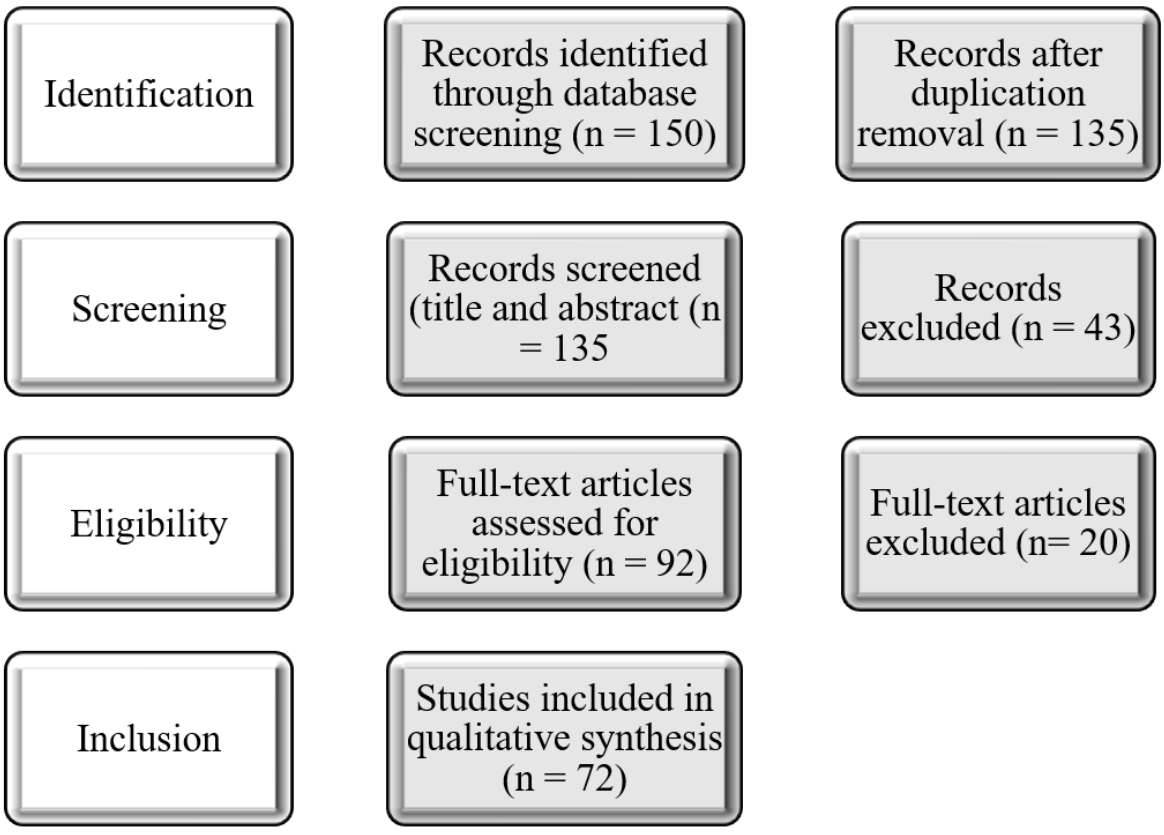

Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion of Articles Reviewed.

of peer review and editorial processes in academic publishing. The problem of "silent" retractions in neuroscience is brought to light by a study that urges openness to preserve confidence in the scientific literature.[38] The lack of specific information in retraction notices and the infrequency of author-led corrections are further highlighted by another study underscoring the need for more informative retraction notices and encouraging responsible authorship.[39] A study observed that there is a need for more effective and transparent retraction procedures, and it also showed delays and incompleteness in addressing publication integrity concerns.[40] Two more studies address the shortcomings in the peer review procedure and propose that improved quality control could be achieved through innovative peer review models and more critical and knowledgeable editorial roles.[41,42] Peer-review fraud is becoming a bigger issue and endangering the validity of the publication process.[43] Another study makes a case for a comprehensive revision of the existing integrity assessment procedure, suggesting the creation of impartial panels to address integrity issues more openly and efficiently.[44] Focusing on the lost chances for manuscript improvement after rejection, it is contended that authors frequently ignore insightful peer review comments and support a system that guarantees accountability in responding to reviewer observations/ suggestions.[45]

All of these studies advocate for a multifaceted strategy to reform academic publishing, including increasing retraction notice transparency, encouraging responsible authorship, making integrity assessments more thorough and timelier, critically revisiting the peer review process, and making sure that authors meaningfully engage with peer review feedback. Putting these suggestions into practice could greatly improve the quality and reliability of academic publications.

Research Gaps and Suggested Agenda

The examination of retractions and corrections in scholarly publications indicates that there is a need for increased openness and effectiveness in dealing with errors and misconduct.[37,40,44] There are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding the efficacy of the current corrective actions and the effects of retraction stigma on the scientific community, despite the growing emphasis on research integrity. Against this context, the proposed research agenda consists of the following:

Comprehensive studies on how journal publishers affect the stigma attached to retractions and whether they facilitate or impede transparency in the retraction process.[46]

Developing and analyzing standardized procedures for correcting scientific records, gauging their effectiveness, and determining whether the academic community accepts them.[44]

Investigating the viability and effects of setting up impartial, independent panels to evaluate publication integrity to ensure uniformity and fairness when handling issues about research misconduct.[45]

Accreditation Requirements and Institutional Pressures

This section analyzes the complex difficulties and structural problems in academic publishing by focusing on the research issue, "accreditation requirements and institutional pressures." The pressure to "publish or perish," accreditation metrics, and the challenge of striking the right balance between quantity and quality are the key reasons behind these problems. The combined findings from multiple research studies highlight how current publication practices negatively impact academic output quality, systemic inequality, and ethical standards.[47-49] They highlight how the academic publishing ecosystem needs to undergo substantial changes to foster a more moral, just, and quality-focused atmosphere. The demands placed on researchers, as well as the wider ramifications for the integrity and progress of scholarly research, should be addressed by these reforms.

The 'Publish or Perish' Culture in Academia

The combined insights from the papers under discussion highlight the complex and harmful effects of the "publish or perish" mentality in academia, highlighting moral dilemmas, structural injustices, and difficulties that Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and academics face in particular. The culture is criticized for its ethical and social justice implications, contending that it undercuts academic identities and puts individual success ahead of the common good.[50] It is argued for systemic change to relieve pressures on ECRs by highlighting their vulnerability within an unethical publishing system that takes money away from academia.[51] Another study highlights the lengthy and frequently discouraging path to publication while acknowledging the perceived future benefits of publishing, focusing on the challenges faced by researchers in the publication process.[52] A paper discusses about how it became more difficult to maintain the integrity and quality of publications during the pandemic and offers ways to deal with these problems.[53] Further contemporary publication practices are criticized for their perpetuation of exploitative practices that discriminate against the "scholarly poor" and their distortion of scientific data.[54,55] When taken as a whole, these studies highlight the urgent need for academic publishing reform in order to create a more moral, just, and encouraging environment for all academicians and researchers.

Impact of Accreditation Metrics on Publication Practices

The examination of the chosen papers shows a complicated environment where accreditation metrics have a big impact on publishing practices and frequently have unforeseen repercussions. A study shows a concerning trend in which universities, in direct reaction to the demands of international ranking systems, use

unusual authorship practices to inflate publication metrics.[56] Similar to this, another study emphasizes the need for strategic management tools that allow research institutes to maximize their performance in compliance with accreditation and ranking criteria by coordinating their publication efforts with their areas of strength.[57] The publication landscape is further complicated by the difficulties Latin American journals face in gaining recognition in international ranking systems, which unintentionally encourage researchers to publish in international journals.[58] Discussion of the oligopoly of academic publishers showed how the concentration of publishing power can impact research's impact and visibility, which is a crucial aspect of accreditation evaluations.[59] Finally, two more studies shed light on the wider ramifications of the evolving academic publishing sector and the tactical solutions required to traverse this terrain, emphasizing the part libraries and institutions play in adjusting to these developments.[60,61]

When assessing and accrediting HEIs, accrediting bodies, including the NAAC, NIRF, and National Board for Accreditation (NBA), place significant emphasis on research publications by the faculty members during the assessment and accreditation of HEIs. This emphasis is a key factor driving the insistence of HEIs on publications by their faculty members.

In conclusion, increased competition, the use of dubious authorship techniques, and a tendency to submit work to esteemed, usually international, journals are all clear indications of how accreditation metrics affect publication practices. These activities, which frequently rely on quantitative indicators like publication counts and impact metrics, stem from the aim to meet or exceed accreditation requirements. The collective findings of these studies point to the need for an improved system of accreditation and ranking that recognizes the variety of research skills and encourages integrity and excellence in publishing practices.

Balancing Quality and Quantity in Academic Output

To strike a balance between quantity and quality in scholarly output, the combined insights from several studies illuminate the intricacies and challenges present in the contemporary publishing environment. A study explored the challenges of peer review, which is essential to ensuring the quality of academic publications, discussing the issues like bias and reviewer fatigue.[62] Another study challenges the prevailing focus on publication quantity at the cost of quality and suggests a shift towards Open Science and cutting-edge publication models like Living Communications.[63] In an analysis of authorship ethics and publishing pressure, a paper emphasizes the negative consequences of unethical authorship practices.[64] A research study looked into the problem of fake peer reviews, which complicates peer review procedures and highlights the need for transparency and vigilance in identifying authentic scholarly contributions.[65] Studies also challenge the effectiveness of the current peer review system in raising citation rates and criticize the unethical aspects of the prevailing publishing model, which is controlled by for-profit entities, advocating for alternative, ethical publishing models.[66,67]

Collectively, these studies shed light on the complex issues of striking a balance between the quantity and quality of academic output, highlighting the necessity of systemic changes in the academic publishing ecosystem that put sustainability, innovation, and ethical behavior over more publication counts.

Research Gaps and Suggested Agenda

Critical gaps that require more research are identified by the review of earlier studies on "accreditation requirements and institutional pressures." The integrity of peer review procedures, authorship ethical quandaries, and the changing dynamics of publisher present areas ripe for exploration. To address these gaps, a research agenda could include the following:

Examining how large publishing conglomerates affect the diversity of scholarly discourse and the possibility of bias in the dissemination of research.[67]

Analyzing the moral dilemmas surrounding academic authorship and suggesting structures to ensure equity and responsibility in group studies.[64]

Evaluating the integrity and effectiveness of the current peer review models in upholding scientific rigor and making recommendations for enhancements to combat the rise of fraudulent reviews.

Ethical Considerations in the Age of AI

This section focuses on another issue, "Ethical Considerations in the Age of AI." While generative AI tools like ChatGPT provide substantial advantages for academic writing in terms of efficiency and accessibility, they also present significant ethical challenges. These include threats to academic integrity, possible inaccuracies, and authorship issues. The research studies reviewed in this section support a well-rounded strategy that upholds rigorous ethical standards while promoting innovative applications of AI to ensure academic work's integrity and uniqueness. The consensus emphasizes the necessity of transparent declarations of AI assistance, responsible AI use, and regulatory actions to maintain academic standards.

The Role of AI Tools in Academic Writing

There has been a mixed reaction to the use of generative AI tools in academic writing, which reflects a wide range of ethical issues. The results of recent research on the application of AI in academic writing are summarized in this section, emphasizing both the apparent advantages and difficulties.

According to a study, Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) in Ghana have adopted generative AI tools like ChatGPT for different parts of their research projects, appreciating the confidence and independence these tools provide.[68] However, questions were raised concerning the information's accuracy, highlighting the need for human oversight. In a similar vein, another paper discussed how GenAI could improve research output while cautioning about risks to research integrity and the need for responsible use.[69] The development of TauchiGPT_V2 provides a promising tool designed to support scholarly research with contextually aware, localized results.[70] However, the framework put forth by a study critiques the potential for AI tools to produce nonfactual inferences and hallucinations, underscoring the significance of upholding academic integrity.[71]

Two more studies highlight how faculty and researchers are incorporating AI extensively into academic writing, pointing out its benefits in terms of productivity and efficiency.[72,73] However, they also emphasize how important it is to have clear rules in order to maintain authorship and the unique character of academic work. The viewpoint of undergraduate EFL (English as a foreign language) students further demonstrates the mixed perception/sentiment regarding ChatGPT and other AI tools.[74,75] These tools are appreciated for helping with idea generation and language improvement, but they also raise concerns about potential for misuse and the effects on learning and writing quality.

Artificial intelligence tools present serious ethical issues even though they have many benefits, such as increased productivity, writing confidence, and resource accessibility. These include concerns over preservation of authorship, the potential for inaccuracies, and the implications for academic integrity. Therefore, their incorporation into academic writing practices requires a balanced strategy that incorporates both the creative application of AI tools and strict adherence to ethical standards.

Plagiarism Concerns and AI-Generated Content

Studies on the issue of "plagiarism concerns and AI-generated content,' show that ChatGPT can improve learning outcomes and academic writing, but if it is not used responsibly, it poses serious risks to academic integrity and human creativity.[73,76] In order to avoid plagiarism and preserve academic standards when using ChatGPT, a study highlights the significance of following responsible practices and citation guidelines.[76] On the other hand, it is cautioned against the careless use of ChatGPT in academic settings, pointing out how it can compromise academic integrity and human creativity.[73]

Maintaining Research Integrity with Emerging Technologies

The rapid development of generative AI technologies, as demonstrated by ChatGPT and other models, presents significant ethical issues for upholding academic research integrity. The potential of ChatGPT to automate academic manuscripts is highlighted, emphasizing the moral dilemmas raised by the use of such large language models.[6] A study explores the regulatory aspects, arguing for clear guidelines and raising doubts about the acceptability of AI-generated content in scholarly publications.[77] A quantitative analysis of AI-generated text detection is presented by another study that highlights the value of programs such as Originality.ai in preserving the uniqueness of scholarly submissions.[78] A gap in current practices across various fields is revealed by a study focusing on the need for transparency in declaring the use of AI tools in academic writing.[79] Similarly, another paper investigates the dual nature of ChatGPT and related NLP (natural language processing) technologies in academic writing, stressing both the risks and potential advantages they present to the legitimacy and authenticity of academic work.[80] When taken as a whole, these studies highlight how urgently academia must adapt to the AI era through transparency, ethical consideration, legal frameworks, and the use of detection tools to preserve research integrity.

Research Gaps and Suggested Agenda

There are still important gaps that need to be filled despite the thorough examination of AI's role in academic writing:[69,70,72]

Standardized ethical standards addressing the authorship and transparency of AI-generated content must be developed.[77]

More studies are required to examine how AI tools like ChatGPT affect research methods and publication processes in a range of academic domains.[6]

It is crucial to investigate how to maintain academic integrity and foster creativity while balancing AI support with human intellectual contribution.[73]

Suggestions for Addressing Challenges in Academic Publishing in the AI Era

To address the persistent and emerging challenges in academic publishing-particularly in the AI-integrated landscape-a multi-pronged, stakeholder-driven approach is essential:

- Resolving Differences in APCs Among Fields: Conducting cross-disciplinary surveys to examine APC variations—with a focus on emerging and interdisciplinary fields—is necessary to address the disparities in APCs across disciplines. Important steps include using publicly available datasets and working with publishers to obtain anonymized APC data. Furthermore, examining funding mechanisms in disciplines with varying APC structures to identify discipline-specific funding agencies and streamline APC policies for OA journals is necessary. To increase awareness and promote equitable APC structures across

academia, the outcomes of these efforts should be published in interdisciplinary journals.

- Subsidizing or Caping APCs: Governments, research funders, and consortia should promote equitable access by subsidizing AOCs for researchers in developing regions or enforcing fee transparency and caps for OA publishing.[42]
- Improving Diversity and Inclusivity in Academic Publishing: Examining demographic and geographic patterns in submissions, acceptances, and rejections is crucial to improving diversity and inclusivity in academic publishing. Finding gaps requires documenting the experiences of underrepresented researchers navigating the publishing ecosystem. A white paper that suggests diversity standards for publishers may then be created and extensively shared. This project would support the development of inclusivity and accountability in the field of academic publishing.
- Standardizing Retraction Processes and Post-Publication Corrections: Journals must adopt uniform retraction protocols, ensuring timely, transparent corrections and maintaining scientific integrity, especially in the wake of increasing paper retractions linked to algorithmic manipulation and predatory outlets.[10]
- Establishing Standardized Procedures for Correcting Scientific Records: In order to streamline and expedite the process of correcting scientific records, platforms for collaboration among authors, reviewers, and readers should be created to handle retractions or corrections. Measuring timeframes and acceptance rates for corrections across journals will provide valuable insights. Piloting standardized protocols with ethical committees and showcasing successful implementations at academic conferences can promote buy-in and establish these protocols as standard practice.
- Independent Panels to Maintain Publication Integrity: The establishment of trial panels comprising interdisciplinary, international experts is recommended to ensure publication integrity. Partnering with major academic societies to sponsor these panels and documenting case studies will help refine their processes. Publicizing their findings and resolutions will build trust and accountability across the academic publishing ecosystem.
- Analyzing the Effects of Publishing Conglomerates on Diversity: To comprehend the effects of publishing ownership concentration on diversity, it is essential to look into how it affects research topics, pricing, and access. Lesser-represented research trends can be amplified by promoting independent journals and diamond OA platforms through collaborations with government organizations and public libraries. The results of these initiatives ought to be extensively shared in order to promote fair publishing practices.
- Academic Authorship's Ethical Challenges: Improving academic integrity requires development of comprehensive authorship guidelines to address ethical challenges in collaborative projects. Research communities should use surveys and focus groups to improve these frameworks, and institutions should set up conflict-resolution mechanisms for authorship disputes. To promote adoption, proposals should be submitted to the ethics committees of leading research institutes and universities.
- Enhancing Peer Review Efficacy with AI Integration: By integrating AI screening and human evaluation, hybrid peer-review models can improve efficiency and reliability. Pilot projects in partnership with publishers are essential, as is thorough reviewer training to identify fraudulent activities. To enable broad adoption, findings and best practices should be disseminated via workshops and academic forums.
- Addressing the Gaps in the Use of AI in Academic Writing: To create discipline-specific ethical frameworks for AI applications in academic writing, a thorough analysis of the effects of AI tools across disciplines is required, with an emphasis on unique challenges and benefits. To ensure widespread adoption across academic fields, interdisciplinary research teams should evaluate AI integration and publish guidelines as OA resources.
- Developing Robust Ethical Guidelines for AI Use: Academic publishers and regulatory bodies (e.g., COPE, ICMJE) must update publication ethics to address AI-generated content, authorship responsibilities, and disclosure requirements.[6] These guidelines must be field-specific and enforced during manuscript screening and peer review.
- Examining the Impact of ChatGPT and Other AI Tools: Investigating how particular AI tools affect publishing workflows and research methodologies can provide actionable insights. It is crucial to develop resources for successfully integrating AI while upholding academic rigor. Informed use of AI tools across academic disciplines can be promoted by exchanging findings through webinars and interdisciplinary collaborations.
- Balancing AI Assistance with Human Creativity: Developing both quantitative and qualitative tools to

evaluate the equilibrium between AI support and human creativity is essential. For guiding policy decisions, it is crucial to work with cognitive scientists to investigate the psychological impacts of AI-assisted creativity. Guidelines that safeguard intellectual contributions while integrating AI technologies can be established with the help of policy briefs published in journals devoted to innovation and research ethics.

CONCLUSION

From prohibitive APCs and ethical dilemmas to the pressures imposed by institutional accreditation requirements and technological advancements, the literature review highlights the wide range of issues facing academic publishing. The financial burden on researchers raises serious concerns about the OA model's sustainability and equity, especially for those from underfunded regions. Furthermore, the use of AI in academic writing raises ethical issues that need to be thoroughly examined and standardized. These problems are made worse by the "publish or perish" mentality, which jeopardizes the integrity and quality of scholarly communication. A concentrated effort to change academic publishing practices is necessary to overcome these obstacles, with a focus on maintaining scholarly integrity, financial accessibility, and ethical clarity.

To move forward, future academic publishing must embrace systemic reforms, technological stewardship, and inclusive policies. More studies are required to develop discipline-specific ethical frameworks for AI use in research writing, especially in light of the growing reliance on generative tools like ChatGPT. Simultaneously, regulatory frameworks should be developed to standardize APCs, promote alternative funding models, and protect research equity, especially in low-resource context. Global academic bodies and accreditation agencies must also revisit publication-driven evaluation systems that fuel the "publish or perish" culture, advocating instead for quality-centric and context-sensitive metrics. Finally, the scholarly community should collectively invest in strengthening the peer review infrastructure, improving retraction protocols, and nurturing a culture of transparency, collaboration, and academic integrity. These future directions are essential not only for preserving the credibility of scholarly communication but also for ensuring that the publishing ecosystem evolves in alignment with the broader values of accessibility, fairness, and scientific progress.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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