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Open Access Repositories in Asia with A Focus on India: A Systematic Review of Trends and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *This research aims to examine the prevailing trends, best practices, and challenges associated with Open Access Repositories (OARs) across the Asian continent, with a particular emphasis on the Indian academic landscape. The study focuses primarily on the development and implementation of Open Access policies, the integration of OARs within institutional frameworks, and the strategies for their sustainable expansion. Additionally, it seeks to identify potential solutions and recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and outreach of Open Access initiatives, thereby contributing to a more equitable and an accessible scholarly communication environment.*

Methodology: *The PRISMA approach was used to carry out the research, where the researcher used three databases to locate scholarly articles in OARs in Asia and India (EBSCO, J-gate+, and Google Scholar) published in the past two decades. He evaluated studies that have direct links to Open-Access Repositories and have been published in English. In addition, the researcher used some dictionaries and encyclopaedia websites to define and clarify technical terms and to strengthen the study.*

Findings: *The primary objective behind the establishment of Open Access Repositories (OARs) is to provide free and easy access to literature, thereby fostering a research-based learning environment in society. Digital repositories serve as essential components in achieving this goal. OARs also facilitate global visibility and contribute to increased citations within the scholarly community. Among Asian countries, Japan has made the most significant contribution, while India hosts 126 public access repositories. However, most OARs face challenges such as inadequate financial support, limited ICT infrastructure, and insufficient backing from parent institutions.*

Originality: *Following the Budapest and Delhi Declarations, Open Access Repositories (OARs) have had a positive global impact, including in India, which has emerged as a leader in the Global South in terms of OAR development and the dissemination of repository content. In this context, Grey Literature (GL) serves as a vital source of knowledge for scientific and academic communities across Asian countries. GL is extensively utilized in research to enhance the body of knowledge on specific subjects. In terms of GL archiving, Asian repositories are significantly ahead of other regions.*

KEYWORDS: Open Access Repositories; Institutional Repositories; Initiatives; Asia; India; Systematic Review.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today is widely recognized as the 'information era', where no activity in any field can progress without access to information (Ranavagol S & Kamble Y., 2025). The free flow of information and open transactions creates numerous opportunities (Ranavagol et al., 2025). In the education sector, the concept of the Open Access Repository (OAR) has provided new directions for innovation and development (Robinson, 2009). Especially after 2004, the advent of Web 2.0 opened up multiple avenues for achieving educational goals (Khan et al., 2022). The success of repositories depends largely on their practical application and usability, which has been further enhanced by advances in information and communication technology (ICT) and the emergence of open-source software (Kalbande, 2012; Ranavagol et al., 2024).

OARs are online databases that contain research outputs, allowing individuals to access, download, and redistribute content freely, rapidly, and permanently (Karadia & Sahoo, 2021). The concept of Institutional Repositories (IRs), introduced as a distinct method of scholarly communication, has attracted considerable global interest. These repositories store a significant volume of digital content created by academic institutions (Pinfield et al., 2014), including videos, audio recordings, and journal article preprints or reprints (Sheikh, 2020; Sharma, 2018).
Standards such as the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) (OCLC, 2022) enable the aggregation of metadata from multiple repositories into a unified, searchable structure. Monitoring initiatives like ROAR and OpenDOAR (Leng et al., 2016), as well as platforms such as Sherpa-Romeo (https://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/) (*Welcome to Sherpa Romeo - Sherpa Services*, n.d.), support the development of OARs by establishing protocols, evaluating policies, and addressing copyright issues on a journal-by-journal basis (Zainab, 2004; Ghosh & Kumar Das, 2007).

The Open Access movement primarily aims to make academic literature freely available online. The development of e-publishing technology has supported the creation of a research-based learning environment. Digital repositories are now considered essential to research infrastructure (Padmavati S Tubachi, 2017), as they offer global exposure and increased citations to scholars who share their work (Pastrana Casteblanco et al., 2022).

2. DEFINITION

An institutional repository is a collection of facilities provided by a parent organization in collaboration with the library, enabling its members, including learners, teachers, scientists, and domain-specific R&D professionals, to upload their research work, academic literature, and other relevant materials for easy and free access by others (Martin et al., 2016) (Pastrana Casteblanco et al., 2022). According to Science Direct, an open-access repository is defined as "a collection of full-text documents available in online databases on the Internet that can be accessed freely and instantly" (ScienceDirect, n.d.). Open Access (OA) literature is freely accessible online without charge for purposes such as studying, downloading, printing, sharing, and searching (JHAMB & SAMIM, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design and Eligibility Criteria:

This study followed the PRISMA framework (Haddaway et al., 2022) to systematically review scholarly literature on Open Access Repositories (OARs) in Asia, with a focus on India. The researcher selected articles published in English over the last twenty years. Relevant studies were identified from three academic databases, EBSCO, J-gate+, and Google Scholar. To enhance clarity and rigor, official websites of academic institutions and organizations were also consulted to define technical terms and provide additional context.

3.2 Search Strategy:

The search employed Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT (Bozzano et al., 2006) to optimize the retrieval of relevant articles. The specific search query used was ((((Open Access Repositories)) AND (Asia)) OR (India)). The search was conducted during November and December 2023.

3.3 Inclusion criteria:

- Studies focusing on Open Access Repositories in Asia, particularly India.
- Articles published in peer-reviewed journals or credible sources between 2003 and 2023.
- Publications available in English.
- Studies that directly discuss the establishment, trends, challenges, or impact of OARs.

3.4 Exclusion criteria:

- Articles not related to Open Access Repositories or outside the geographic focus of Asia/India.
- Publications in languages other than English.
- Non-scholarly articles such as blogs, opinion pieces, or non-peer-reviewed content.
- Studies published before 2000.

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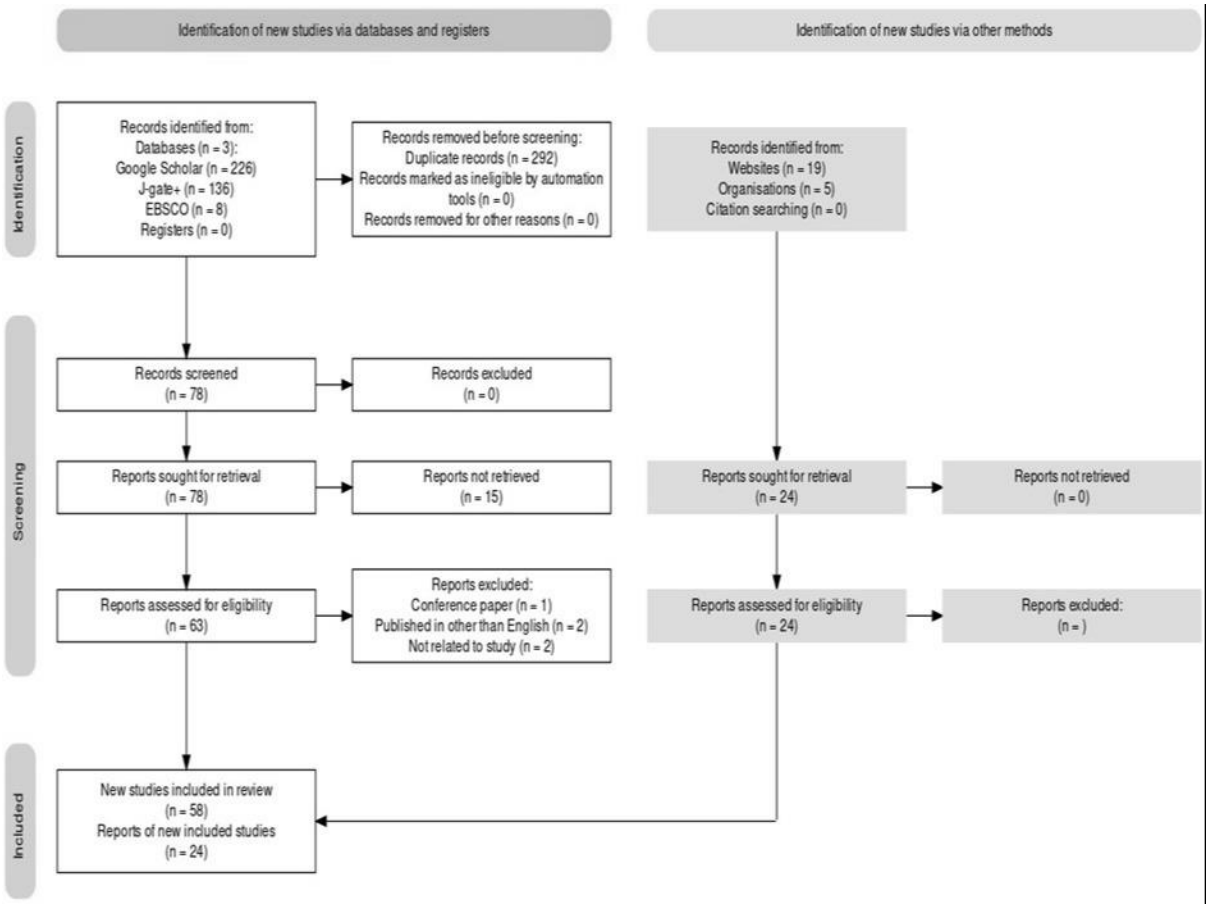
3.1. Flow Chart:



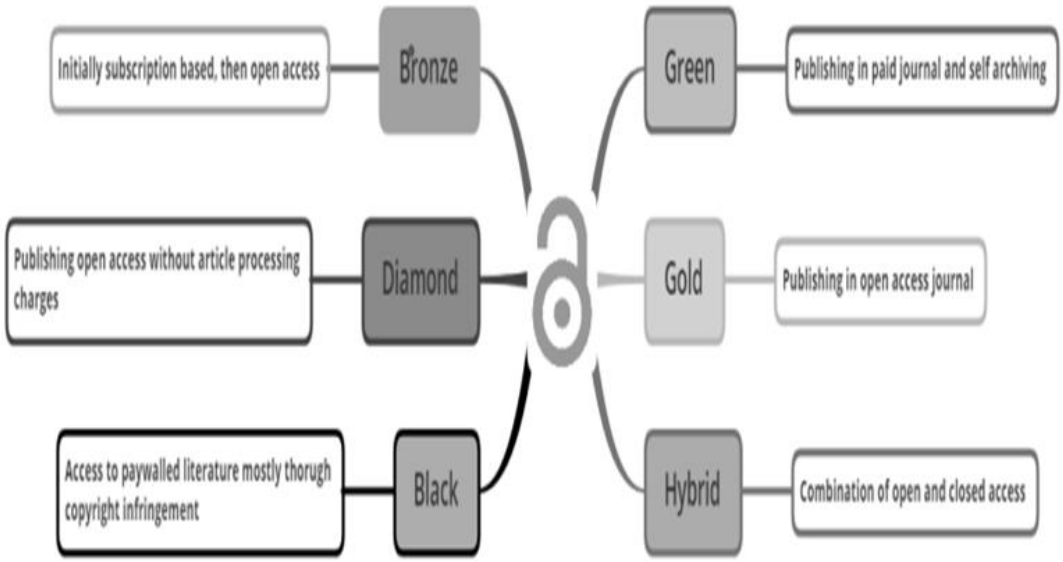
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The initial search across Google Scholar, J-gate+, and EBSCO databases yielded a total of 370 scholarly publications related to Open Access Repositories. Applying the PRISMA screening process, the researcher systematically filtered these studies based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Following this rigorous screening and review, 28 papers from Google Scholar, 22 from J-gate+, and 8 from EBSCO were selected for detailed analysis. In total, 58 scholarly articles were reviewed in alignment with the study objectives. Additionally, 19 relevant websites and 5 organizational portals were consulted to supplement the findings and provide contextual understanding.

5. OPEN ACCESS REPOSITORIES (OAR)

Open Access Repositories (OAR) refer to the practice of providing free access to peer-reviewed scientific research outputs. Open Access (OA) publishing facilitates unrestricted access to scholarly publications, thereby enhancing the dissemination, visibility, and impact of research findings (Barman et al., 2023). The demand for free access to research is particularly significant among independent researchers and developing countries, where it contributes substantially to innovation in scholarly communication (Mamdapur, 2021). The Platinum Open Access model exemplifies this approach by promoting equity in academic publishing, as it neither charges authors nor readers, potentially increasing citations and scholarly influence (Grumezescu et al., 2019).

Type of Open Access



Source: (Krishnamurthy et al., 2021)

The open-access movement gained significant momentum in the 1990s as increased internet accessibility made open-access scholarly papers more relevant (Pradeepkumar et al., 2022). Open Access Repositories (OARs) enable free digital scholarly communication, allowing users to study, download, print, share, and search research outputs without charge. Rather than competing, open access repositories and peer-reviewed journals coexist and can mutually enhance the dissemination of scholarly work (Pinfield, 2007).

Repositories also play a vital role in distributing grey literature, such as theses, which boosts visibility and citation rates (Ferreras-Fernández et al., 2015). Institutional repositories (IRs) are particularly important for organizing and disseminating an institution's intellectual resources. Beyond their institutional value, IRs contribute to a global network of interoperable repositories, supporting a decentralized model of scholarly communication (Ralte, 2019). These collections reflect not only academic output but also a society's socio-economic and indigenous knowledge, thus preserving cultural heritage (Kilcer et al., 2025).

Globally, approximately 40% of open-access institutional repositories use software like DSpace, highlighting the impact of repository platforms such as EPrints and DSpace in establishing IRs (*OpenDOAR Statistics - Sherpa Services*, n.d.). The United States leads with 843 OARs, followed by Japan (655), Germany (300), the United Kingdom (268), and India (129) (Njoku et al., 2023). In terms of content, journal articles dominate with 4,283 entries, followed by theses and dissertations (3,590), book chapters and sections, and 876 learning objects. Subject-wise, social sciences have the highest number of OAR entries (4,506), followed by science (4,396), humanities (4,236), technology (4,035), medicine (4,019), and mathematics (3,573). Overall, the number of OARs continues to grow steadily.

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Figure-01

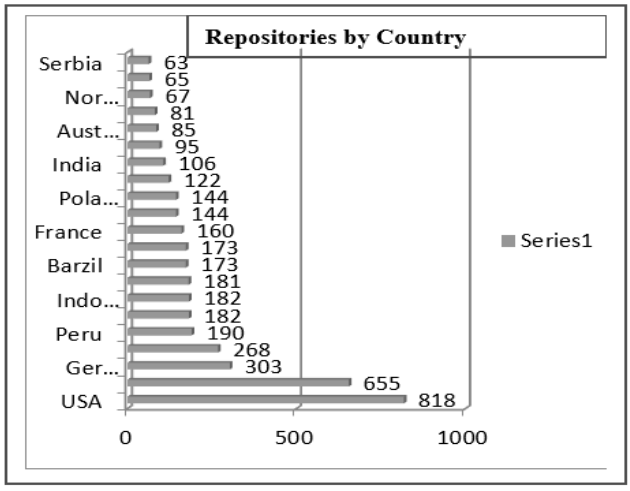
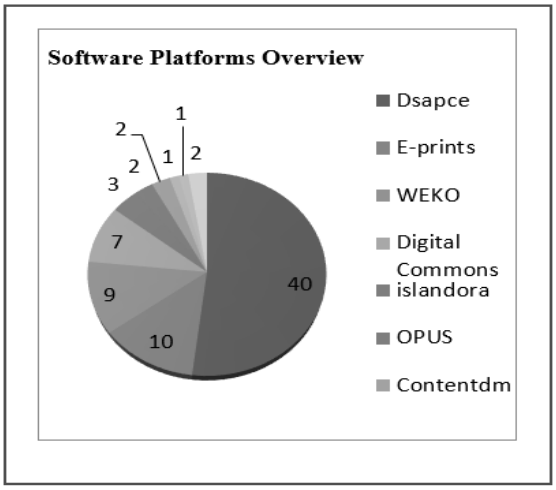


Figure-02



Source: https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/opendoar/

Figure-03

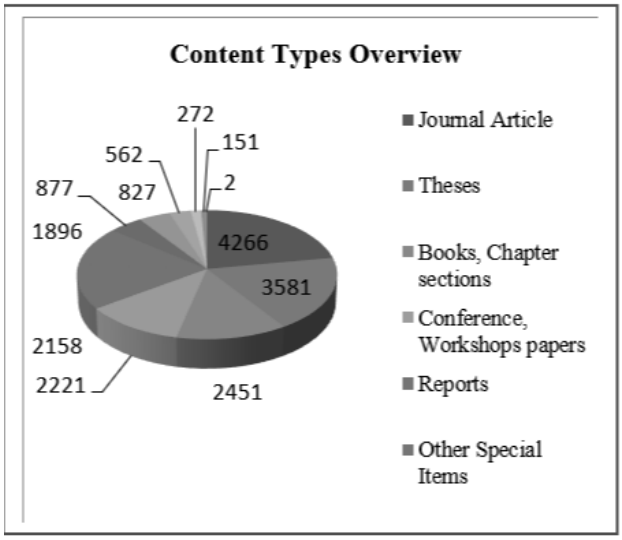


Figure-04

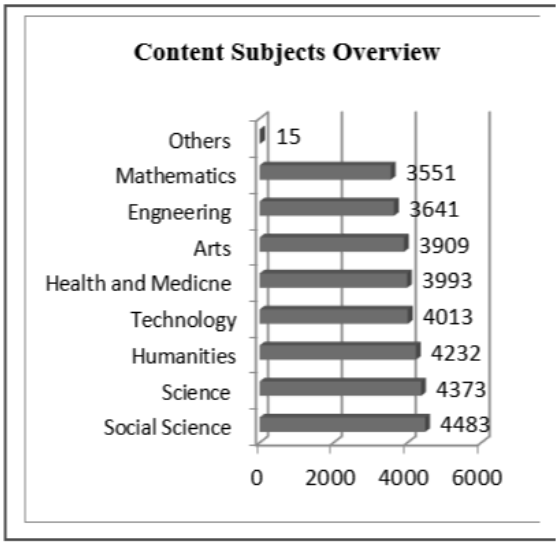


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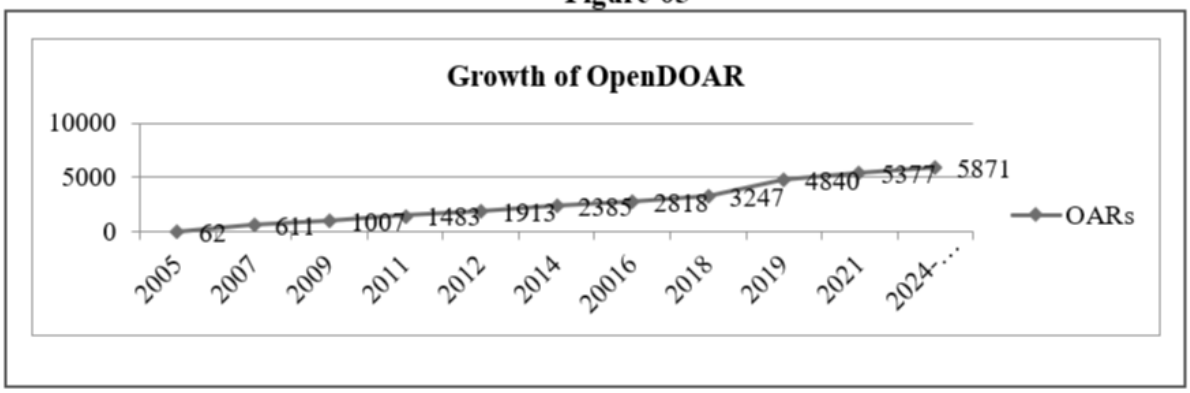
Figure-05



Source:https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/opendoar/[27]

6. OPEN ACCESS REPOSITORIES (OAR) IN ASIA

Open Access Repository technology is increasingly embraced across Asian countries, reflecting a growing commitment to an open-access culture that supports innovation and leads to a steady rise in repositories throughout the region (Njoku et al., 2023). Asia ranks third globally in the development of OARs (Gul et al., 2020). Significant growth has been observed in countries such as Malaysia, India, and Bangladesh, although the progress and challenges vary among these nations (Elahi & Mezbah-ul-Islam, 2018) (Das & Sarmah, 2022). Japan leads Asia in the number of open-access health and drug repositories, while China, Turkey, and Indonesia host more Web 2.0-enabled repositories than Japan (Abrizah et al., 2010). Overall, Asian countries continue to adopt the OAR ethos, with an annual increase in the number of archive facilities (Z. A. Wani et al., 2014). Japan maintains the highest concentration of open-access digital repositories in Asia (Loan, 2014). Turkey, meanwhile, has the largest number of Web 2.0-enabled repositories, and India ranks lowest among the top five Asian countries in repositories linked with social networking sites (Khan et al., 2022). Among fourteen South and East Asian countries, only five have publicly accessible Library and Information Science (LIS) repositories registered with OpenDOAR (*Open Access Initiatives in Western Asia – InfoDoc MicroVeille*, 2021) (Roy & Ghosh, 2022).

The Berlin Declaration (2003) (*Berlin Declaration*, n.d.), Bethesda Statement (2003), and Budapest Open Access Initiative (2003) (*Budapest Open Access Initiative*, n.d.), collectively known as the BBB statements, have provided foundational conceptual support for advancing the goals of open access. The Bethesda Statement specifies two key requirements for open access publications: first, they must be deposited in a repository for long-term preservation; second, they must grant readers the rights to copy, use, distribute, and create derivative works, ensuring free and permanent access (Hameau, 2018).

In India, the Open Access India (OAI) advocacy group issued the Delhi Declaration on Open Access titled "Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing" in February 2018 (Society, n.d.). Within two weeks, this declaration was endorsed by over 120 signatories from India and other Global South countries. Among the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), India accounted for 24% of institutional repositories in 2020, ranking second after Brazil, while China and Russia contributed 15% and 12%, respectively (Negi, 2022). Specifically, India had 102 institutional repositories registered with OpenDOAR, followed by China with 64 and Russia with 50.

Above figures highlight the significant role of information and communication technology (ICT) and the adoption of open access culture—particularly through Open Access Repositories in Asian countries (Roy & Ghosh, 2022). This reflects a broader movement toward decentralized scholarly publishing and enhanced global visibility for researchers (Nassar et al., 2019). While Indonesia, China, and India are familiar with the OpenDOAR registration process, Japan recorded the highest number of Open Access Repository registrations in 2021. Furthermore, English is the common language used for content uploads across repositories in these four Asian countries (G. A. Wani & Astunkar, 2021).

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7. OPEN ACCESS REPOSITORIES (OAR) TRENDS IN INDIA

India leads Asia in the number of Open Access Repositories, with 112 registered repositories. At the national level, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (now Ministry of Education) initiated key open access repositories in 2005, including Shodhaganga, Shodhgangotri, INFLIBNET repositories (*INFLIBNET Centre Gandhinagar*, n.d.), and the National Digital Library, all maintained by INFLIBNET under the University Grants Commission (UGC) (*National Digital Library of India*, n.d.) (Ahmed et al., 2021).

Shodhgangotri serves as a repository of PhD synopses from Indian universities, offering insight into ongoing research and helping prevent duplication of efforts. Shodhaganga (*Shodhgangotri @ INFLIBNET*, n.d.) contains theses and dissertations submitted by research scholars, providing a critical resource for scholars to check existing work before undertaking new research (Khode, 2019). These initiatives align with the UGC Act 2009 and its 2016 amendment regulating minimum standards for M.Phil. and PhD degrees (*Shodhganga : A Reservoir of Indian Theses @ INFLIBNET*, n.d.). Shodhaganga uses DSpace software with OAI-PMH protocol and Dublin Core metadata standards. Contributions come from central and state universities, with Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) accounting for 33.7% (6458 theses and dissertations) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) contributing 25.5% (4693 submissions). Tamil Nadu's 33 universities are also significant contributors (Subbiah, 2018), while Assam alone accounts for 63.21% of submissions from the Northeast region (Esh & Ghosh, 2021).

The Indian Council of Medical Research - National Institute of Epidemiology (ICMR-NIE) (*National Institute of Epidemiology*, n.d.) has developed an institutional repository using DSpace to archive scientific papers, epidemic articles, annual reports since 1979, research project reports, theses, and dissertations from its staff and students (Satish, 2019). The National Health Resource Repository (NHRR), managed jointly by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) (*National Health Resource Repository (NHRR) :: Central Bureau of Health Intelligence*, n.d.), provides standardized, up-to-date geographic data on public and private healthcare facilities in India, supporting decision-making through a geospatial mapping platform (Kapur & Kurian, 2020).

Northern Indian agricultural institutions access "Krishi-Prabha," (University, 2009) a free doctoral dissertation repository managed by Haryana Agricultural University and ICAR's institutional repository Krishikosh (*Krishikosh Repository :: Home*, n.d.). In the Northeast, only two universities, Chowdhury Sarwan Kumar Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishwavidyalaya (CISR, n.d.) and Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Science & Technology Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, maintain institutional repositories. Faculty at Cochin University of Science and Technology in Kerala actively preserve their scholarly works and advocate for institutional repository policies that encourage self-archiving to expand accessible content (Shajitha & Majeed, 2019).

Several national-level repositories include the Digital Repository of the Centre for Documentation and Research in Science and Technology (DRTC) (*Home \textbar Documentation Research And Training Centre (DRTC)*, n.d.), National Institute of Plant Genome Research (*NIPGR Digital Knowledge Repository (NDKR): Home*, n.d.), National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis , National Chemical Laboratory, Pune (*Welcome to NIRT Institutional*

Scholarship Repository (NIRTISR) - EPrints@NIRT, n.d.), Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) (*NIScPR Online Periodical Repository: Home*, n.d.), Indian Institute of Astrophysics (*Home-Indian Institute of Astrophysics*, n.d.), Raman Research Institute (*RRI Digital Repository: Home*, n.d.), and others (V M & Kumar A, 2022). Regarding software platforms, a majority of Indian repositories (69.79%, n=67) use DSpace, followed by 27.08% (n=26) utilizing EPrints, and 3.13% (n=3) employing Greenstone (Khode & Chandel, 2015).

8. BARRIERS TO OPEN ACCESS REPOSITORIES

Institutional repositories (IR) face challenges such as collection creation, content organization, technical issues, and compliance with laws and regulations (Saini, 2018). Grey literature (GL), a crucial resource for research, is well archived in Asian repositories (Bansal, 2020). Major obstacles to establishing OARs include budget constraints, lack of institutional support, limited technological infrastructure, preservation issues, and insufficient librarian awareness of OA channels (Baro & Eze, 2017) (Macevičiūtė & Kepalienė, 2022). Scholarly authors often prefer peer-reviewed journals due to their reputation and concerns about copyright and plagiarism, limiting repository submissions (Chavez, 2010) (Tmava, 2022). Grey literature constitutes over 60% of OAR content, increasing access to otherwise hard-to-find resources (Shukla & Ahmad, 2018). However, concerns about data security and cyber threats remain significant, requiring institutions to prioritize protection measures.

Indian Digital Repositories (IDRs) suffer from poor maintenance and low awareness among academics. Institutions like IIT Kharagpur should mandate metadata extraction for better integration. UGC and CSIR should provide financial and infrastructural support to promote digital archiving (V M & Kumar A, 2022). Despite free repository software availability, many Indian universities lack adequate infrastructure (Idiegbeyan-Ose et al., 2020). Developing proper preservation policies and registering repositories with OpenDOAR are crucial for enhancing accessibility (Banwarilal Bhalotia College & Chakrabarti, 2017). Awareness programs and regular updates are needed to increase adoption and maintain engagement (Ajibade, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Open-access repositories have become essential platforms for the sharing and dissemination of scholarly research across disciplines and geographical boundaries. By providing unrestricted access to research outputs, these repositories significantly enhance the visibility, accessibility, and impact of academic work, enabling knowledge to reach a broader and more diverse audience. This democratization of information not only supports the advancement of science and scholarship but also fosters greater collaboration among researchers, institutions, and the public.

In the evolving landscape of academic communication, open-access repositories serve as a critical infrastructure that challenges traditional publishing models by promoting transparency and equitable access to information. Libraries, research institutions, and other stakeholders play a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining these repositories, ensuring the preservation and long-term availability of scholarly materials. Furthermore, the development of open-access repositories introduces new responsibilities and opportunities for information professionals, who must navigate issues related to digital curation, metadata standards, copyright, and user engagement. Encouraging the adoption and support of open-access repositories is thus fundamental to addressing the future needs of the academic

community. By embracing these platforms, institutions contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and efficient research environment that not only accelerates knowledge dissemination but also empowers researchers worldwide to participate fully in the global exchange of ideas.

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