



Vietnamese researchers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding open access publishing: a cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to explore Vietnamese researchers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding open access (OA) publishing.

Methods: A cross-sectional online survey was conducted between May and July 2024, gathering responses from 238 Vietnamese researchers across diverse universities and disciplines. Descriptive statistical analyses were used to identify key trends in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors among different demographic groups.

Results: Vietnamese researchers primarily acquired information about OA through websites and colleagues, with ScienceOpen, PLOS, and SSRN serving as the main sources. Although they valued OA for its accessibility and broad dissemination, they expressed concerns regarding high publication fees and the quality of OA journals—particularly issues related to peer review rigor and potential risks to academic reputation.

Conclusion: The findings indicate strong support for OA publishing among Vietnamese researchers, despite ongoing concerns about high costs, journal credibility, and insufficient institutional support. Strengthening funding models, institutional advocacy, and quality assurance mechanisms is essential for building trust in OA and fostering a more inclusive scholarly environment.

Keywords

Practice of knowledge and attitudes; Open access publishing; Vietnam; Cross-sectional studies

Introduction

Background

Globally, there has been a significant shift toward open access (OA) publishing, driven by policies from governments, funding agencies, and academic institutions that recognize its value in

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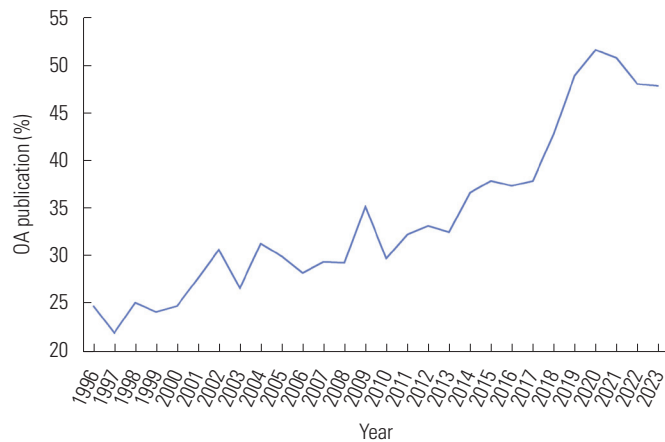


Fig. 1. Percentage of open access (OA) publications in Vietnam (1996–2023). Data from SCImago [4].

enhancing research visibility and impact [1]. However, the adoption and utilization of OA vary considerably across regions and disciplines [2]. In Vietnam, a dynamic and rapidly growing academic and research community highlights the transformative potential of OA publishing [3]. Data from SCImago [4] indicate a remarkable increase in the country’s engagement with OA, with the proportion of OA publications rising from 24.8% in 1996 to 47.9% in 2023, peaking at 51.6% in 2020 (Fig. 1). This steady growth reflects Vietnam’s commitment to using OA as a strategic tool for advancing research capabilities and overcoming long-standing to academic progress.

Vietnamese researchers may face barriers that hinder their full participation in OA publishing. Such obstacles include limited awareness of available OA options, concerns about the perceived quality and credibility of OA journals, and apprehensions regarding publication fees associated with some OA models [5].

Understanding researchers’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding OA is crucial for developing strategies that promote equitable access to scientific knowledge [6]. These insights can inform policy decisions, educational initiatives, and support systems tailored to the global academic community [1]. Furthermore, enhanced engagement with OA can improve research visibility worldwide, foster international collaboration, and drive scientific progress on a global scale [7]. Despite growing research on attitudes toward and utilization of OA journals [8] and various studies focusing on OA policy [9], limited research exists on what researchers actually know about OA publishing.

Objectives

This study aimed to investigate Vietnamese researchers’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding OA publishing. The specific goals were as follows: first, to assess the extent of Viet-

namese researchers’ knowledge about OA publishing; second, to evaluate their prevailing attitudes toward OA publishing; and third, to examine how they engage with OA platforms in their scholarly practices.

Methods

Ethics statement

This study adhered to standard ethical principles, including full anonymity, respect for privacy, data confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Only demographic information (sex, age, highest degree, academic rank, field, years of experience, and position) was collected to ensure that no data could be traced back to individual identities. Participants were informed about the study’s aims, methods, potential benefits, and risks before providing consent, and they could withdraw at any time without consequences.

Study design and setting

This study was a cross-sectional survey-based investigation. An online survey was conducted between May and July 2024 using Google Forms (Google LLC) to collect data from academic staff. The survey link was distributed via a Facebook group and institutional email lists to reach a diverse range of participants. The research data comprise responses from the participants (Dataset 1).

Participants

Data were collected via an online survey that included responses from 238 academic faculty members representing 34 higher education institutions across Vietnam. The survey targeted individuals holding at least a bachelor’s degree and engaged in teaching or research activities. The sample encompassed a broad range of ages, academic qualifications, years of experience, fields, and ranks.

Variables

The primary variables were those measured by the scales included in the questionnaire.

Data sources/measurement

The survey consisted of 16 Likert-scale questions and 3 multiple-choice items, designed to capture various facets of respondents’ knowledge, practices, and attitudes toward OA publishing. The survey items are presented in Suppl. 1. No formal validity or reliability tests were conducted, as the items were developed by the authors and did not adhere exclusively to Likert or binary scale formats.

Bias

Only voluntary responses were included in the analysis, which may introduce selection bias.

Study size

The study size was not predetermined since participation was voluntary. Additionally, no inferential statistical analyses were performed.

Statistical methods

A total of 238 responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated to provide an overview of general trends in knowledge, behavior, and attitudes.

Results

Knowledge of OA platforms

Participants were allowed to select all applicable sources of

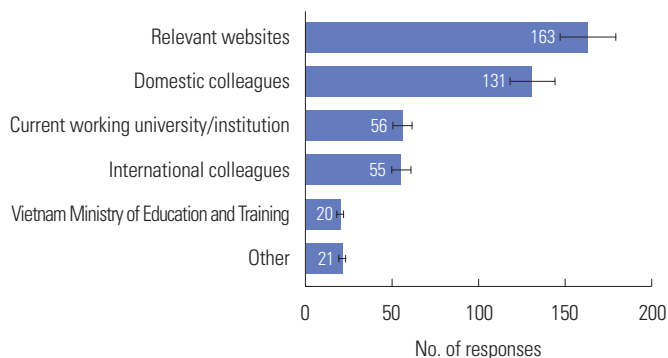


Fig. 2. Participants' sources of information on open access journals.

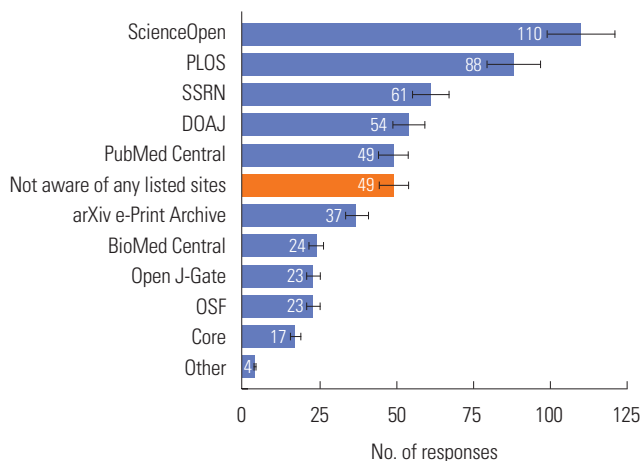


Fig. 3. Participants' knowledge of open access journal platforms. DOAJ, Directory of Open Access Journals.

knowledge, and a summative item was created to examine the prevalence of multiple sources. The findings indicate that relevant websites and domestic colleagues are the primary avenues for obtaining OA information, underscoring the importance of accessible, peer-based resources (Fig. 2).

ScienceOpen (<https://www.scienceopen.com/>), PLOS (<https://plos.org/>), and SSRN (<https://www.ssrn.com/>) were the main platforms through which participants learned about OA journals. Notably, 110 participants (46.2%) reported that they first became aware of OA journals through ScienceOpen, making it the most frequently mentioned source (Fig. 3).

Attitudes toward OA publishing

Participants generally had positive attitudes toward OA publishing (Fig. 4). Fig. 5 shows participants' perceptions of the costs associated with OA publishing. The findings shown in Fig. 6 suggest that participants perceived OA journals as offering quick publication but had moderate concerns about the quality and rigor of the peer review process.

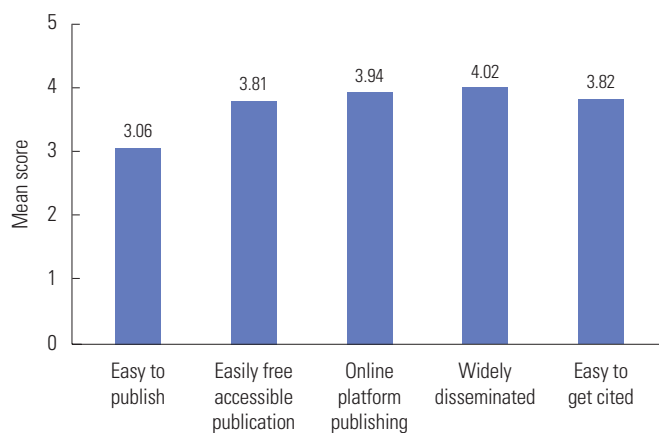


Fig. 4. Participants' attitudes toward open access publishing.

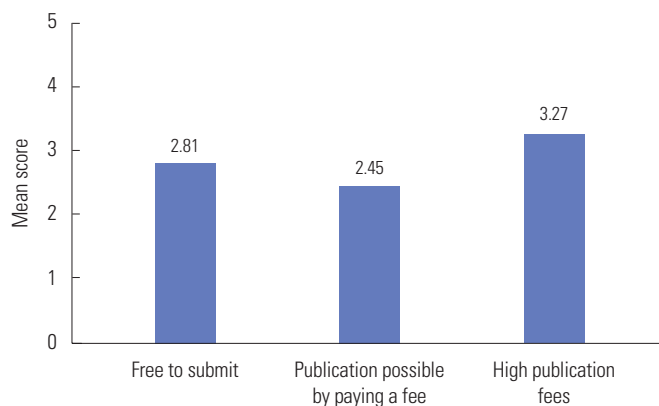


Fig. 5. Participants' perceptions of publication costs in open access publishing.

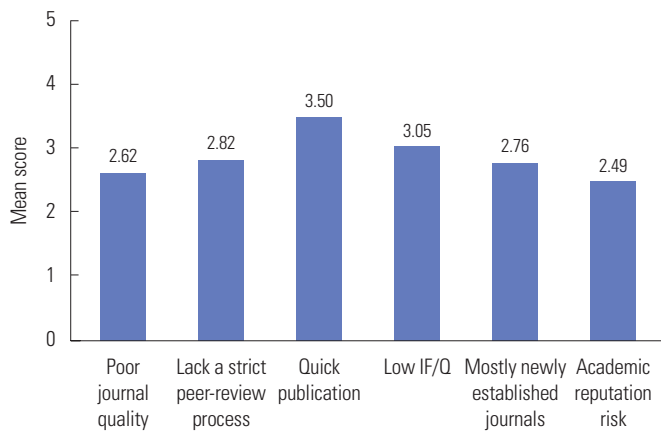


Fig. 6. Participants’ perceptions of quality and reputation in open access journals. IF, impact factor; Q, quartile.

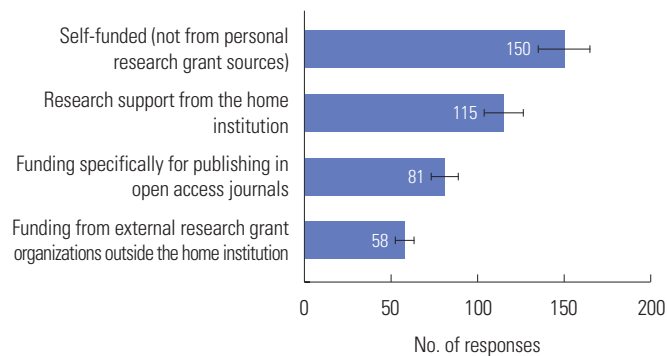


Fig. 7. Funding sources for publication costs in open access journals.

Practices and intentions regarding OA

Fig. 7 shows that 150 participants (63.0%) were willing to self-fund OA publishing, even without using personal research grants, demonstrating a strong personal commitment despite financial challenges. Fig. 8 presents data on participants’ willingness to pay for OA publishing costs. Most participants (45.1%) were only willing to pay under US \$100, while 30.2% were willing to pay between US \$100 and \$499. The results in Fig. 9 also show that most participants were “willing” (56.7%) or “very willing” (8.4%) to publish in OA journals, indicating a generally positive attitude.

Discussion

Key results

Participants primarily obtained information about OA journals through peer-based and established platforms such as ScienceOpen (46.2%), PLOS, and SSRN. Overall, attitudes toward OA publishing were positive, with high scores for accessibility (mean, 3.81 out of 5) and dissemination (mean, 4.02

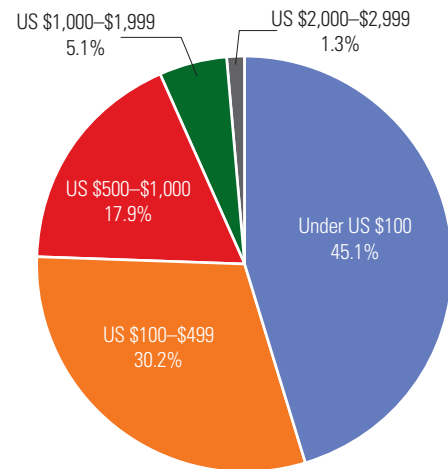


Fig. 8. Participants’ willingness to pay for open access publishing.

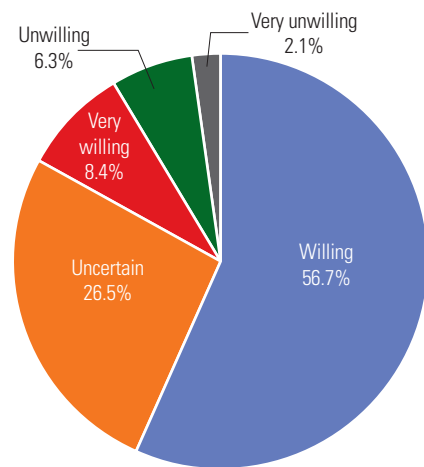


Fig. 9. Participants’ willingness to publish in open access journals.

out of 5). Nevertheless, concerns persisted regarding costs (mean, 3.27 out of 5) and the rigor of the peer review process (mean, 2.82 out of 5). Although most participants expressed a willingness to self-fund OA publishing, 45.1% were only willing to pay less than US \$100, and 56.7% were willing to publish in OA journals.

Interpretation/comparison with previous studies

Knowledge acquisition about OA platforms

The results indicate that researchers predominantly acquired knowledge about OA platforms and journals through relevant websites and domestic colleagues, highlighting the importance of accessible, peer-based resources. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the critical role of peer networks in disseminating knowledge [9]. In contrast, institutional or governmental sources—such as universities or the Vietnam

Ministry of Education and Training—played a relatively minor role, suggesting gaps in formal support for OA awareness. This observation differs from earlier studies that underscored the importance of institutional support for OA knowledge [1]. Furthermore, while established platforms like ScienceOpen, PLOS, and SSRN were frequently mentioned, others such as the Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ) and PubMed Central were underutilized, indicating potential opportunities for enhanced outreach. Addressing these gaps through strengthened institutional support, targeted awareness campaigns, and peer-led initiatives may foster broader and more inclusive engagement with OA resources.

Opportunities and challenges in OA publishing

The findings highlighted both the potential benefits and challenges of OA publishing. Participants appreciated the accessibility and wide dissemination of OA publications, recognizing their ability to enhance visibility and citation impact. However, concerns regarding the quality and rigor of the peer review process, along with apprehensions about academic reputation risks, echo findings from Xu et al. [9] and suggest persistent doubts about credibility. Cost-related barriers, particularly high publication fees, emerged as a significant concern, limiting equitable participation even when free or subsidized options are available [10]. Moreover, procedural challenges in navigating OA platforms may deter wider adoption, even among those who value its benefits [11]. Addressing these challenges through improved transparency, enhanced editorial standards, and equitable financial models is crucial for fostering trust and inclusivity in OA publishing.

Support for and barriers to OA publishing

The results of this study reveal strong overall support for OA publishing among participants, consistent with prior research [9]. Many participants demonstrated a strong personal commitment to self-funding OA publications—even in the absence of dedicated grants—highlighting the perceived importance of OA despite financial challenges. Nevertheless, a preference for lower publication costs indicates that high fees remain a significant barrier, aligning with concerns raised in [12]. While most participants expressed willingness to publish in OA journals, a notable portion exhibited uncertainty or reluctance, likely due to cost concerns or doubts about journal quality. These results underscore the need for more accessible funding mechanisms, such as institutional or external support, and initiatives to address quality concerns, thereby encouraging broader adoption of OA publishing [1].

Limitations

First, the cross-sectional design of this study provides only a

snapshot of participants' attitudes, knowledge, and practices at a single point in time; thus, it does not capture how these aspects might evolve over a researcher's career [13]. Second, because the data are self-reported, there is potential for inaccuracies as participants may unintentionally underreport or overstate their awareness or behaviors [14]. Third, although the study included a range of higher education institutions, the sample may not fully capture the perspectives of researchers from remote areas, underrepresented disciplines, or specialized settings, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Fourth, since certain fields garnered more responses than others, the data might be skewed toward specific academic specialties. Finally, because the survey was distributed entirely online, it likely reached individuals who are active and comfortable in digital environments, potentially overlooking researchers with limited internet access.

Conclusions

This study offers valuable insights into Vietnamese researchers' experiences and perceptions of OA publishing, revealing both enthusiasm for its benefits and reservations about its challenges. Participants valued the accessibility and broad dissemination provided by OA platforms, recognizing their potential to enhance visibility and research impact. However, their reliance on peer-based resources and established platforms underscores a lack of institutional and governmental support for promoting OA awareness. Although many expressed a willingness to self-fund OA publishing, high associated costs and concerns about the quality and credibility of OA journals remained significant issues. These reservations reflect deeper structural challenges, including financial inequities and doubts regarding the rigor of the peer review process. To fully realize the potential of OA publishing, it is essential to address these challenges through stronger institutional advocacy, equitable funding models, and transparent quality assurance mechanisms. By doing so, the academic community can foster greater trust in OA and promote a more inclusive and impactful scholarly ecosystem.

Article Information

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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Data availability

Dataset file is available from the Harvard Dataverse at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SX6V0W>.

Dataset 1. Research data comprising responses from the participants.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary file is available from the Harvard Dataverse at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SX6V0W>.

Suppl. 1. Survey items to find Vietnamese researchers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding open access publishing.

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