

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Open Access



Health research publications of Bangladesh—an appeal for policy reform and long-term investment

Mohammad Jahid Hasan^{1*}, Md. Fahmid Uddin Khondoker², Monjur Rahman¹, Aaysha Cader^{3,4} and Hasnat Sujon^{1,5,6}

Keywords Scientific publication, Bangladesh, Journal, Scientific progress

Bangladesh has made huge strides in economic growth and healthcare delivery since its independence 50 years ago, although significant lags exist in all domains of health. One of the key domains of a vibrant health policy is health research. Health research in Bangladesh is getting growing attention among the stakeholders; however, in the case of one of the key indicators—Bangladesh-origin scientific journal—the achievement is quite frustrating, where the presence of internationally indexed journals is next to zero. The *Journal of Statistical Research*, commenced in 1970, published by the then University of Dacca, is the first contemporary Bangladesh-origin journal [1]. Immediately after independence, in 1972, Bangladesh Medical Journal—the first medical journal of the country—commenced publication which is continued to date [1]. As of 2022, the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BM&DC) recognizes 156 journals published by different medical colleges, universities, and professional societies of Bangladesh [2]; 145 of them are listed on

Bangladesh Journals Online (BanglaJOL), a virtual platform that maintains online publication of Bangladeshi journals, which has archived 22,509 articles since 2007 [3]. However, there is a decline in the number of new journals listed in databases, with an additional decline in the overall listing rate as well (Fig. 1). Currently, 21 Bangladeshi medical journals are indexed in the Web of Science [4], 15 in the Scopus database [5], and only one in MEDLINE [1]. Twenty-six Bangladesh-origin journals had initially been listed in PubMed/MEDLINE; however, only *Mymensingh Medical Journal* has retained its indexed status (Fig. 1) [1]. Furthermore, there are no Q1/Q2 journals according to the Scopus journal ranking (SJR) [5].

No Bangladeshi journal uses a contemporary online-based submission platform, with submissions mainly received via emails. There are systematic delays in the regular update of journal websites; most journals have no retrievable individualized web links to the specific article. As such, articles may not show on regular searches, leading to few or no citations. Thus, very few local journals have achieved an impact factor greater than 1 [4, 5]. In fact, the only MEDLINE-indexed Bangladeshi medical journal has no impact factor to date.

A vicious cycle of events contributes to this low performance of medical publishing. There is little incentive for conducting research in the medical community. At the policy level, there is a near total blindness to publication as evidenced by the promotion rules of the government of Bangladesh for health cadres, which gave very insignificant weightage to publication [6]. On the

*Correspondence:

Mohammad Jahid Hasan

dr.jahid61@gmail.com; jahid.hasan@tdhrc.org

¹ Tropical Disease and Health Research Center, Dhaka, Bangladesh

² Bangladesh Journals Online (BanglaJOL), Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS), Dhaka, Bangladesh

³ Department of Cardiology, Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute, Dhaka, Bangladesh

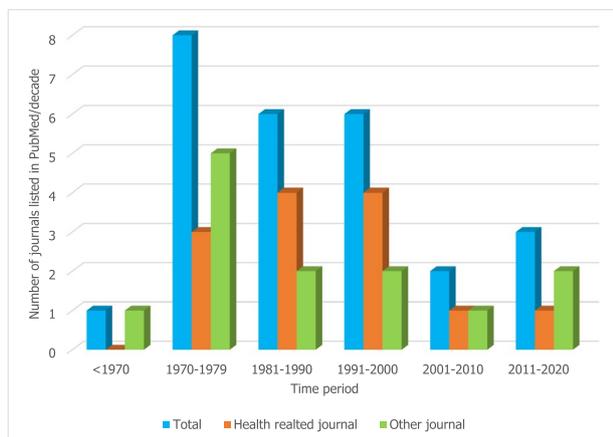
⁴ University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

⁵ Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Dhaka, Bangladesh

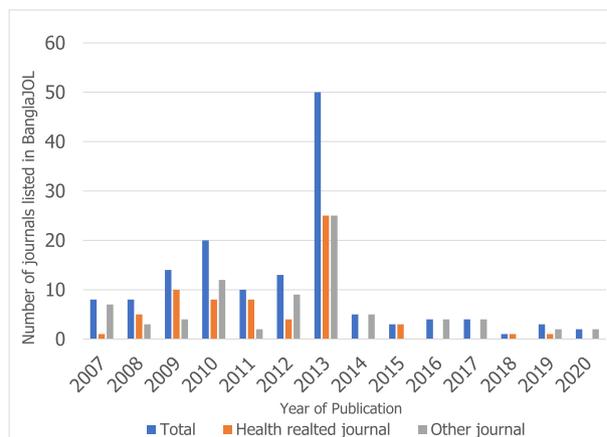
⁶ Hannover Medical School, Hannover, Germany



© The Author(s) 2023. **Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



A. Number of journals listed in PubMed per decade;



B. Number of journals listed in BanglaJOL per year.

Fig. 1 Trends in the generation of new scientific journals of Bangladeshi origin over time. **A** Number of listed journals in PubMed per decade. **B** Number of listed journals per year in BanglaJOL

other hand, professionals who conduct research refrain from submitting even locally pertinent research to local journals as they are not indexed, opting for international journals instead. Local journals are hence left with no option but to publish poor-quality articles, which impede the journal's progress.

Bangladesh still has a long way to go in terms of achieving excellence in research, as evidenced by the strikingly few research institutions dedicated to scientific research, a scarcity of research funds, and an insufficient number of good-quality journals and publications. The lack of skilled and motivated manpower to run an efficient editorial process is a major challenge. Journal activities are often undertaken entirely by only a few members of the editorial board, the majority of whom provide a voluntary service, with no protected research time, leading to an inability to commit the time and effort necessary to produce high-impact deliverables. Absent recognition on reviewer-crediting systems such as *Publons* results in a limited number of qualified reviewers. No formal training exists to train young researchers and clinicians to acquaint themselves with the editorial process and equip themselves with the skills necessary to take up positions in the future. The hardship of scientific publication is further amplified by the lack of attention to the problem by the government and relevant academic institutions and scientific societies. Lack of funding remains an impediment to the standardization and development progress of journals. Financial investments are necessary to improve scientific publication processes, such as the adoption of modern submission portals, technical support for updating websites, and protected time for

editorial board members. Additionally, the measurement of social media metrics or altmetrics should be instituted. Strategic steps to motivate and train young scientists, to produce high-quality research, are therefore currently warranted.

A collaborative effort by academic physicians, the government, and relevant local stakeholders, with the help of the international community, is therefore crucial to achieve sustainable development of scientific publications in Bangladesh.

Acknowledgements

None

Authors' contributions

Conceptualization: MJH. Data curation: MJH and MFUK. Writing—original draft preparation: MJH, HS, MR, MFUK, and FAC. Writing—review and editing: MJH, HS, MR, MFUK, and FAC. Final approval: MJH, HS, MR, MFUK, and FAC. The author(s) read and approved the final manuscript.

Authors' information

Not applicable

Funding

None.

Availability of data and materials

Available based on reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

None.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Received: 5 November 2022 Accepted: 15 January 2023
Published online: 23 January 2023

References

1. NLM catalogue. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nlmcatalog/?term=Bangladesh%5Bpl%5D+AND+nlmcatalog+pubmed%5Bsubset%5D>. Last accessed: May 12, 2021.
2. Bangladesh Medical & Dental Council (BM&DC). List of medical and dental journals. Retrieved from <https://www.bmdc.org.bd/about-journal>. Last accessed: Aug 23, 2022.
3. Bangladesh Journal Online. Bangladesh Journals Online. Retrieved from <https://www.banglajol.info/index.php/index/about>. Last accessed: Aug 23, 2022.
4. Master journal list, Web of Science. Retrieved from: <https://mjl.clarivate.com/search-results>. Last accessed: May 12, 2021.
5. SJR: SCImago ranking and country ranking. Retrieved from: <https://www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php?q=bangladesh>. Last accessed: May 25, 2021.
6. Chowdhury ME, Sujon H, Hassan MR, Sarker AR, Ilias S, Sarker M, Shiblee SI, Ahmad J, Akhter S, Islam MS (2022) Chapter 15: Research in health sector. in 50 years of independence: growth of health sector in Bangladesh, Prothoma, Dhaka

Publisher's Note

Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Submit your manuscript to a SpringerOpen[®] journal and benefit from:

- ▶ Convenient online submission
- ▶ Rigorous peer review
- ▶ Open access: articles freely available online
- ▶ High visibility within the field
- ▶ Retaining the copyright to your article

Submit your next manuscript at ▶ [springeropen.com](https://www.springeropen.com)
