



Students' Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Open Access Journals in Accelerating Paper Completion

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to analyze students' perceptions in depth regarding the benefits of open access journals in the process of completing students' final assignments.

Methodology: This research method uses naturalistic qualitative to analyze students' perceptions of Open Access journals in completing their final assignments. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 20 physics education students who use open access journals. This research instrument uses a semi-structured interview guide. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis.

Main Findings: Open Access Journals accelerate the completion of students' final assignments through free, fast, and quality access to scientific literature. Students feel that these journals enhance research independence, enrich students' understanding of the research topic, and provide a global perspective. However, challenges such as variation in journal quality, limited access to full articles, and language barriers still exist. However, students can overcome these by using alternative platforms and being more selective in choosing journals.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study offers a new perspective on the contribution of Open Access journals in accelerating the completion of final assignments for students in developing countries, especially Indonesia, who face financial and information literacy constraints. This study highlights students' experiences in using Open Access journals, accessibility challenges, and solution strategies, providing applicable insights for the development of open access-based education policies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Copyright is an important aspect of scientific publishing and communication. Over time, copyright rules have come to be seen not only as a protection for scientific works, but also as an obstacle to access to information. According to one study Beiter [1], copyright often restricts the dissemination, access and reuse of research results. Publishers block access to journals to prevent scientific papers from being published or copied without permission

[2], [3]. While these access restrictions are intended to protect the intellectual property of authors and publishers, they also create challenges, particularly for researchers and students who do not have access to paywalled journals.

In some cases, journal access locking is considered a mechanism to maintain quality and credibility. Zukerfeld et al. [4], but in the current era of openness such as technological advances this approach is starting to be challenged [5], [6]. Although not all open access journals are of low quality, and not all paid journals are of high quality Luks [7], the assumption that open access is more vulnerable to “piracy” continues to be debated [8].

In a global context, open access (OA) has become an alternative that offers a solution to the challenge of accessing scientific literature [9]. Initiated by the Open Society Institute through the Budapest meeting in 2001 [10], [11] Open Access carries the idea that scientific research should be freely accessible via the internet at no additional cost to readers [12]. This model was adopted as an effort to increase the progress of global knowledge by making research results available to everyone without financial barriers [13], [14]. In developed countries, open access has become commonplace, while in developing countries, this model brings a breath of fresh air to academics who are often constrained by limited funds [15], [16].

In international comparative studies, several universities in developed countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and several countries in Europe have integrated open access into their academic policies, making it easier for students to access scientific information at no additional cost [17]-[19]. Meanwhile, in the ASEAN region, initiatives like this are still in their early stages and require support from various parties in order to have a significant impact.

At the ASEAN level, several countries have also begun to adopt an open access model with various policies that support research and scientific publications that can be accessed by the public at large [20], [21]. This initiative not only helps increase citation rates, but also enriches access to scientific literature in the region [22], [23] For example, Indonesia has begun to adopt the Open Access initiative, although challenges in implementation and user awareness are still quite large [24]. In Thailand and the Philippines, the government has even begun to provide incentives for open access scientific publications to increase the visibility of local research in the international arena.

Studies have shown that Open Access has a positive impact on academia, including increasing citations and expanding the reach of research [25], [26]. This is especially helpful for students and academics at institutions that cannot afford to subscribe to paid journals [27]. A study comparing open access journals with subscription journals showed that openly available literature is more frequently cited and accessed, enriching references that can be used in broader academic research [28], [29]. Websites such as Mendeley, Academia.edu, and ResearchGate have contributed to making it easier for academics to share information, although these platforms are sometimes considered to violate copyright laws.

In particular, for students, open access provides a very important resource in compiling final assignments and theses, especially for those with financial constraints [30]. The use of open access journals has helped them accelerate the collection of relevant library materials [31], [32] However, students' perceptions of the benefits of open access are still varied, and some of them do not yet understand the importance of open access literature in supporting their research [33]. There are still barriers, including a lack of information literacy regarding credible open access journals and language barriers in scientific articles [34]. This triggers the need to improve students' understanding in identifying reliable open access sources, such as DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) and PubMed Central, which provide free access to a variety of quality journals [35].

Thus, it is increasingly important to explore students' perceptions of the effectiveness of open access, especially in completing their final assignments. This study is expected to provide in-depth insights into the contribution of open access journals to the thesis completion process, identify the challenges faced, and provide recommendations for the development of open access policies that support students' academic needs in higher education.

The renewal of this study lies in its contribution to understanding Indonesian students' perceptions of the use of Open Access journals for final assignments, especially in the context of developing countries with limited financial and information literacy challenges. This study provides in-depth insights into students' experiences, highlights the effectiveness of Open Access in supporting academic research, and identifies the challenges faced and the solutions used. By exploring the challenges and solutions faced by students in accessing Open Access journals, this study provides a deeper perspective on the importance of accessibility of scientific resources.

This study provides benefits to students by increasing their understanding of Open Access journals. In 1-2 years, higher education institutions can implement policies to promote and train journal access. In 3-5 years, this study is expected to encourage policy changes that integrate Open Access, improve student research, and strengthen Indonesia's position in the global scientific community. This study aims to understand students' perceptions in depth regarding the benefits of open access journals in the process of completing students' final assignments.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Types of research

This study uses a naturalistic qualitative method to understand students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Open Access journals in accelerating the completion of final assignments. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand individuals' experiences, views, and perceptions in depth and holistically in their natural context [36]-[38] regarding the accessibility and use of Open Access journals in their academic context. Naturalistic qualitative methods are research approaches that aim to understand phenomena in their original or "natural" context without intervention or manipulation from the researcher. In the context of this study, this naturalistic qualitative is relevant because the researcher wants to explore students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Open Access journals in accelerating the completion of final assignments in depth, by considering the experiences and views of individuals directly in their academic environment.

2.2 Research Subject

The population in this study were students who had used Open Access journals in the process of compiling their final assignments. This study used a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews with 20 students from the physics education study program. The selection of this sample was based on the criteria of students who were or had compiled their final assignments and actively used Open Access journals as references in their final assignment research.

2.3 Data Collection Technique

Through naturalistic qualitative methods, the results of the study will provide an in-depth and contextual picture of the influence of Open Access journals on the process of completing students' final assignments, helping researchers understand how policies or support can be improved to maximize their benefits. In this approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews that provided space for participants to share their personal experiences without being limited by strict research instruments [39]. Data collected through in-depth interviews not only produced in-depth descriptions but also provided rich contextual insights into how Open Access journals affect students' research abilities holistically [40]. The grid of questions related to students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Open Access Journals is as follows.

Table 1. Grid Table and Interview Questions

Grid	Question
Understanding of Open Access Journals	1. What do you know about Open Access journals, and how do you think they differ from paid journals? 2. Are you familiar with Open Access journal platforms such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, or DOAJ? How did you learn about these platforms?
Motivation for Using Open Access Journals	3. What is your main reason for using Open Access journals in your final project writing process? 4. What is the biggest benefit of using Open Access journals compared to other sources of information?
Effectiveness of Open Access Journals in Final Projects	5. Do you feel that Open Access journals make it easier and faster to complete your final assignment? Why? 6. How big a role do Open Access journals play in helping you understand your chosen research topic?
Impact of Open Access Journals on Research Ability	7. Do Open Access journals affect your ability to conduct research independently? Explain why. 8. How does using Open Access journals help you access and understand scientific literature relevant to your research?
Barriers to Accessing and Using Journals	9. What are the challenges you face when accessing or using Open Access journals in your research? 10. How do you overcome obstacles that may arise when using Open Access journals? What suggestions can be made to make it easier for students to access Open Access journals?

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Next, data processing is carried out in several stages, namely as follows:



Figure 1. Data analysis stage

In naturalistic qualitative research, data reduction is done by selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data from in-depth interviews. Researchers read interview transcripts repeatedly to understand the meaning of each participant's statement. Information that is not relevant to the focus of the research is removed, while data that is relevant is grouped into themes that emerge naturally from participant responses, such as motivations, benefits, and challenges of using Open Access journals. This process is done in stages to remain in accordance with the natural context of the data.

The reduced data is presented in the form of descriptive narratives to illustrate the main patterns found. In naturalistic research, data presentation aims to maintain the natural context of participant responses. For example, a theme such as "Effectiveness of Open Access Journals" contains direct quotes from participants to show the depth of the data. This presentation helps researchers understand the relationships between themes and get a comprehensive picture of the research results.

Conclusions in naturalistic research are drawn inductively, namely based on patterns and themes that emerge from the data collected, especially from interviews with students regarding the effectiveness of Open Access journals. Researchers interpret findings while still considering the natural context of student experiences, such as financial challenges, information literacy, and accessibility of academic resources. The conclusions produced reflect the reality experienced by students, for example how Open Access journals affect the acceleration of their final assignment completion. This approach ensures that the conclusions are not only theoretically relevant but also applicable in supporting scientific journal accessibility policies in the university environment.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From 20 students, interview results were obtained that showed how the perception related to the use of open access journals in completing final assignments. Question 1 was intended to determine students' understanding of the definition and concept of Open Access journals. According to Sources 1 and 2, they mentioned what an open access journal is and the difference with a paid journal, namely:

"Open Access Journal is a scientific journal that can be accessed for free by everyone, without subscription fees. So, anyone can read and download it without having to pay. Unlike paid journals that require us to pay or subscribe to be able to read the articles in them. In my opinion, Open Access is very helpful for students who have limited funds, especially for final project research."

Sources 1 and 2 understand that Open Access journals are journals that can be accessed for free by everyone. Unlike paid journals, this journal does not require a subscription fee to access its articles. They consider Open Access journals to be very helpful, especially for students who have limited funds to access the literature needed for research, especially for final assignments. After that, for question number 2, it is aimed at student knowledge about the types of Open Access journal platforms (eg, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, DOAJ). According to sources 3 and 4, they mentioned:

"Yes, I am quite familiar with those platforms, especially Google Scholar and DOAJ. I know from lecturers who suggest that we look for references from credible sources, especially for final assignments. Google Scholar is the one I use most often, because besides being easy, the sources are also diverse. DOAJ and ScienceDirect are also sometimes used if Google Scholar is not enough. I also often get recommendations from friends who already know these platforms."

Interviewees 3 and 4 indicated that they were familiar with several Open Access platforms such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and ScienceDirect. They received recommendations from lecturers to search for credible references on these platforms. Google Scholar is the most frequently used platform due to its ease of access and variety of sources, while DOAJ and ScienceDirect are used as alternatives if sources on Google Scholar are insufficient. This shows that students have been able to choose the appropriate platform for their academic needs.

Next, for question 3, it is intended to find out the main reason for using Open Access journals in the process of compiling your final assignment. According to sources 5 and 6, they mentioned:

“The main reason is of course because it can be accessed for free. As a student, cost is a big consideration. Especially if you have to access international journals, the cost can be very high. With Open Access, I can get many and varied references without having to spend money. This is very helpful, especially in the early stages of compiling my final assignment when I need a lot of literature.”

Sources 5 and 6 explained that the main reason they use Open Access journals is because of the free access provided. Cost is one of the main considerations for students, especially when they need to access international journals that are usually expensive. Open Access makes it easy for them to get various references needed in compiling their final assignments without having to spend money. For question number 4, it is aimed at the greatest benefit of using Open Access journals compared to other sources of information. According to sources 7 and 8, they mentioned:

“In my opinion, the biggest benefit of Open Access journals is the speed of access. I can immediately get the articles I need without waiting long or applying for access to the campus. Open Access journals have also usually gone through a peer-review process, so I believe the quality is good enough to be used as an academic reference.”

According to informants 7 and 8, the biggest benefit of Open Access journals is the speed and ease of access. Students can immediately get the articles they need without having to wait or apply for access to the campus. In addition, they consider the quality of Open Access articles to be quite good because they have generally gone through a peer-review process, so they meet the requirements to be used as references in scientific works.

Furthermore, for question 5, it is intended to find out whether students feel that Open Access journals make it easier and faster to complete their final assignments. According to informants 9 and 10, they mentioned:

“Yes, it makes things easier and faster. With easy access, I can search for articles that are relevant to the topic and immediately explore the material from various perspectives. For example, if I find a relevant article, I can immediately search for other supporting articles without any cost or access constraints. This definitely speeds up my research process, especially in the literature review section which requires a lot of scientific references.”

Interviewees 9 and 10 felt that Open Access journals made it easier and faster to complete their final assignments. Easy accessibility allowed them to quickly find relevant articles, explore the material, and search for other supporting articles without cost or access constraints. This helped speed up the research process, especially in compiling a literature review that requires many scientific references.

For question number 6, it is aimed at how big a role Open Access journals play in helping you understand your research topic. According to interviewees 11 and 12, they mentioned:

“The role of Open Access journals is very important, especially in enriching my understanding of the topic. I can read various articles from researchers in various countries, so I get a broader perspective. This is important because the final project requires a strong literature base. Without Open Access journals, I might have difficulty getting a complete picture of the issues I am researching.”

Interviewees 11 and 12 stated that Open Access journals play a major role in enriching their understanding of research topics. By reading articles from researchers in various countries, they gain a broader and deeper perspective. This is very helpful in building a strong literature base, which is important to support final project research.

Next, for question 7, it is aimed at influencing your ability to conduct research independently with the help of Open Access journals. According to interviewees 13 and 14, they mentioned:

“Very influential. With Open Access journals, I feel more motivated to find out in depth without having to rely on lecturers or campus libraries to provide access. I have become accustomed to finding and evaluating sources of information myself, and this has made me more confident in independent research. In addition, I have become more aware of how to choose quality articles because not all Open Access articles are of the same quality.”

Sources 13 and 14 said that the existence of Open Access journals made them more motivated to conduct research independently. They do not need to rely on lecturers or campus libraries to access the literature they need.

The use of Open Access also helps them learn to select quality articles, because not all articles in Open Access have the same quality standards. For question number 8, it is intended for the use of Open Access journals to help you access and understand scientific literature that is relevant to your research. According to sources 15 and 16, they mentioned:

“Open Access helps a lot in understanding scientific literature because all the information is complete and open. The articles have a clear scientific structure so they are easy to understand. By reading many Open Access journals, I also understand better the format of good scientific writing, including how to organize my own research results.”

Interviewees 15 and 16 explained that Open Access journals were very helpful in understanding scientific literature relevant to their research topics. The scientific and open structure of the articles made it easier for them to learn good writing formats, as well as organize their own research results. In addition, they considered reading many Open Access journals helped them understand the applicable scientific writing standards.

Next, for question 9, it addressed the challenges you face when accessing or using Open Access journals in research. According to interviewees 17 and 18, they mentioned:

“The main challenge is that sometimes the quality of Open Access journals is not always the same. There are some journals that may be less standardized or seem too general, so I have to be careful in choosing. Also, even though Open Access is free, not all the articles I search for are directly available on certain platforms. Sometimes I find only the abstract on Google Scholar, but have to find alternative platforms to get the full version.”

Interviewees 17 and 18 revealed several challenges when accessing Open Access journals. They realized that the quality of articles in Open Access is not always standardized, so they have to be selective in choosing quality articles. In addition, although Open Access is free, not all articles are available on the same platform, so sometimes they only find abstracts without access to the full text, which forces them to look for other platforms to get the full article. For question number 10, it is aimed at how to overcome obstacles that may arise when using Open Access journals and suggestions that can be made to make it easier for students to access Open Access journals. According to interviewees 19 and 20, they mentioned:

“Yes, when I don't find the article I need on the official platform or other Open Access, I sometimes use Sci-Hub. It helps me complete references that are difficult to access on other platforms. In addition, I also try to use DOAJ or directly search on the websites of foreign universities that provide free access to some journals”

Interviewees 19 and 20 mentioned that when they had difficulty finding articles on official platforms, they sometimes used Sci-Hub to access paid articles for free, even though this was not a legal way. In addition, they also tried to find articles on DOAJ or foreign university websites that provide free access to certain journals. This is a practical solution that they use to complete references that are difficult to find on regular Open Access platforms. Data were collected through interviews conducted directly. The data analysis process was through thematic analysis, which allowed the identification of main themes based on consistent responses among participants. The results of this study indicate that Open Access journals have a positive contribution in accelerating the completion of students' final assignments. Students reported ease of access as the main benefit, especially because access to these journals is free, which helps those with financial constraints. The use of Open Access journals also enriches students' understanding of research topics through extensive and diverse references [41]. However, some students face obstacles, such as limited journals in certain fields and language barriers in some scientific articles, which sometimes limit the optimal use of Open Access journals.

In questions 1 and 2 related to students' understanding of the concept of Open Access journals and available platforms, the interview results showed that most students understand that Open Access journals can be accessed for free without a subscription fee. They are also familiar with platforms such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and ScienceDirect, and use Google Scholar more often because of the ease of access and variety of sources available. This shows that students not only understand the concept of Open Access but also know how to use it for their research.

In questions 3 and 4 discussing the main reasons for using Open Access journals in compiling their final assignments and the greatest benefits of using them, students revealed that the main reason they chose Open Access journals was because of free access, which is advantageous considering the high costs for paid journals, especially international journals. They also considered Open Access journals to offer better access speed, allowing them to get relevant articles faster, which speeds up the process of searching for references, especially in the early stages of compiling their final assignments.

In questions 5 and 6 on how Open Access journals make it easier and faster to complete final assignments and their role in helping students understand research topics, students felt that Open Access journals played a major role in enriching their understanding. Easy access allowed them to find relevant articles quickly and enriched their perspectives, especially from international researchers, which is very important in building the literature base for final assignments.

In questions 7 and 8, which discussed the influence of Open Access journals on students' independent research skills and their understanding of scientific literature, students felt that Open Access journals increased their independence in research. They became more confident in searching and evaluating sources of information without relying on lecturers or the campus library, and helped them understand good scientific writing standards and organize research results better.

Finally, in questions 9 and 10, which revealed the challenges faced when using Open Access journals and how to overcome them, students revealed that although Open Access offers free access, they still face obstacles such as variations in journal quality and limited access to full articles. To overcome this problem, some students look for alternatives on other platforms or use Sci-Hub, even though this is not a legal way. This shows that although Open Access is very helpful, there are still challenges in ensuring optimal quality and access.

In comparing this research with previous studies, it is seen that previous research conducted by developed countries tends to focus on aspects of increasing Open Access accessibility in developed countries [42]. This study excels in its focus on Indonesia, showing how Open Access provides a solution for students with financial constraints. In developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, Open Access is more developed and access to information is no longer a major issue. Instead, this study provides important insights into how Indonesia can leverage Open Access to improve the quality of local research and international visibility. The Indonesian government's policy of starting to support Open Access also strengthens access to scientific literature at the national level [43], [44]. However, this study faces challenges not found in research in developed countries such as the United States or the United Kingdom, where awareness of Open Access is higher and scientific platforms are more established. In Indonesia, student awareness of Open Access is still limited, and the quality of Open Access journals is not well standardized, which limits their effectiveness as credible scientific reference sources. In contrast, this study provides perspective on the local context in Indonesia, where financial constraints and limitations of paid literature are more significant. Previous research has also focused more on improving citations and accessibility in general Hakami [45], while this study focuses on the contribution of Open Access in completing students' final assignments, an aspect that is rarely discussed in previous literature.

This research update is to offer a new contribution in understanding Indonesian students' perceptions of the use of Open Access journals in completing their final assignments, by highlighting the context of developing countries that face greater financial challenges compared to developed countries. In addition, this study emphasizes the limitations of students' information literacy in recognizing credible Open Access journals, which are often overlooked in previous studies. The results of this study provide in-depth insights into students' experiences and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Open Access journals in completing final assignments. Each answer reflects students' experiences and views in utilizing Open Access journals, showing how Open Access supports them in the academic research process as well as the challenges faced and how to overcome them. The implications of this study are the importance for universities and libraries to be more active in promoting credible and quality Open Access journals, in order to support students' academic needs. In addition, journal providers are expected to address barriers to accessibility and availability of scientific literature more widely.

This study has several limitations that need to be noted. The limited sample size of 20 students provides an in-depth view but may not fully represent the diversity of students' perceptions from various study backgrounds, institutions, or geographical areas. Future research is suggested to involve more samples from various study programs, education levels, and regions to increase the representativeness of the results. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods) can also be used, with structured surveys to identify broader patterns of perception and produce more generalizable findings. This research provides direct benefits to students by increasing their understanding of Open Access journals as a reference source for completing their final assignments. In the next 1-2 years, universities can immediately implement policies to promote access to Open Access journals, as well as conduct socialization and training to improve students' academic literacy on how to access and utilize scientific journals effectively. In the next 3-5 years, the results of this study can encourage policy changes in universities to further integrate Open Access journals into the educational process, improve the quality of student research, and strengthen Indonesia's position in the global scientific community. This research can also trigger innovation in a more open academic publishing system, accelerate the distribution of scientific knowledge, and increase international collaboration.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that Open Access journals help students accelerate the completion of their final assignments through free, fast, and quality access to scientific literature. In addition to increasing research

independence, these journals enrich students' understanding of research topics. However, obstacles such as varying journal quality, limited access to full articles, and language barriers are still found. Universities are advised to promote credible Open Access journals and improve students' information literacy. Further research with larger samples and mixed-method approaches is needed to produce more representative findings and support Open Access-based academic policies.

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