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Withdrawal of UGC Care List of Journals in India: A Step Towards Reform or A Risk to Research Integrity

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ABSTRACT

The UGC CARE List was introduced in 2019 to replace the 'UGC List of approved journals' and serve as a reference for researchers and institutions to identify quality journals for publishing their work, ensuring adherence to ethical standards and promoting credible research. As time went on, the UGC CARE List faced many criticisms. Owing to many such criticisms, the list was withdrawn in February 2025, and a new set of suggestive parameters for peer-reviewed journals has been introduced. The paper discusses whether abolishing the list and introducing a set of suggestive parameters will risk the maintenance of ethical standards in academic research or lead to reforms in research.

Keywords: Higher Education, Higher Education Institutes (HEI), Research Publications, Quality of Journals; UGC List of Approved Journals, UGC CARE List of Journals, Suggestive Parameters, India

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1. Introduction

The announcement of research findings is considered vital to the advancement of knowledge. No researcher wants to keep his/her research results in the dark or unpublished. Publishing an article is considered an authentic way to document research in the public domain. Journals are the most powerful tools for documenting and disseminating research. This is evident from the days of '*rishis*', '*munis*' (saints, philosophers) and all those involved in unearthing the truth. From clay tablets to manuscripts to incunabula to various print media to e-media have been used to showcase the research findings.

Journals - the 17th-century media formats have been considered as the most authoritative, credible, visible and timely sources to reveal the results. Over four centuries, their prominence has been more impressive than that of other formats. Every researcher wants to publish their research in scholarly journals for greater recognition, visibility, credibility, and better career opportunities. The big question is how to identify which journals are highly scholarly. Many parameters exist, but so do many low quality journals, and their number is increasing day by day. This will negatively impact the quality of research. Efforts have been made worldwide to standardise the criteria for considering a journal highly reputable. Publishing agencies like Elsevier, Thompson & Reuters, and many others have published lists of journals considered highly valuable based on various criteria. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) have also published specific parameters and guidelines. In this regard, in India, an effort was made to compile a standard list of journals as the UGC Approved list in 2017, and a new UGC CARE List of journals was introduced in 2019, which was discontinued in 2024, leaving many questions unanswered. In this paper, we analyse whether this move will bring reforms or pose risks to research integrity.

2. Historical Foundations

360 years have passed since the first scientific journal, '*Journal des Scavans*', was published in 1665 [1] and in the same year, 'Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society' began the practice of formally reviewing articles before publication. Thanks to Henry Oldenberg, the 'Father of Modern Scientific Peer Review', who reviewed these articles. However, the Royal Society of Edinburgh initiated the practice of peer review for scholarly publishing in 1731 [1]. Two years later, the first fully peer reviewed journal, 'Medical Essays and Observations', was published in 1733 by the Medical Society of Edinburgh. Since then, many scholarly journals have adopted peer review as a standard procedure. The procedure continued for almost three centuries, until 'Nature' in 1973 [2], followed by 'Cell' in 1974 [3], decided to have submitted manuscripts peer reviewed by external reviewers.

The 1970s marked a significant period for scholarly publications to be reviewed by experts before publication in journals [2] As such, peer reviewed journals became one of the quality indicators, regardless of the type adopted, be it single or double blind review or open peer review. The Industrial Revolution and pre and post World War issues have radically changed the very face of research, shifting it from individual curiosity to institutionally driven research [4]. A large number of non peer reviewed journals were also used for publication [6] worldwide without compromising research ethics. Indexing and abstracting journals (later databases) have developed their own policy for the consideration of inclusion of scientific journals [7]. The same trend continued, even as the Science Citation Index, Current Contents, Web of Science, and Scopus adopted similar policies. When the publish or perish syndrome became more prominent [8] academics began to find that a significant number of journals were compromising research quality and research ethics [9]. These journals, identified as 'Predatory Journals' [10](Beall, 2012), were found to cause significant damage to scientific publishing [11] .

Before 1900, there were 68 periodicals in India, of which 25 were journals, many of which were peer reviewed [12]. The scientific community in India before independence was too small and published its research either through journals (Indian or British) or as books [13], and many of these were seminal works by renowned scientists [14]. After independence, the size of the scientific community grew enormously and many learned institutions, organisations, associations, and a few individuals started publishing journals. Although many

were peer reviewed journals with very strong editorial boards, they could not attract fellow scientists to publish their articles in Indian journals [15] as very few journals were included in the Science Citation Index/ Journal Citation Reports [16]. The scientific community was very interested in publishing their papers elsewhere, preferably in Western, developed countries [17]. They were concerned about the journal's reputation in the discipline. As such, Indian journals suffered in many ways [19], including publication delays and lack of recog- nition by international databases. Even then, many Indian journals were often published with a time lag, carrying very good research articles of local, regional, or national interest (area studies) that could not find a place in international journals [22]

This trend changed quite radically at the beginning of the 21st century, when UGC, India, linked appointments, promotions, and the award of PhD to publications, with different weightage marks in API calculations [23]. Soon, Indian journals were flooded with new submissions. Even those journals which were either passive (sleeping) or running with a one to two-year delay became highly active. The existing size of the publishing market was insufficient to meet researchers' demands. This led to the proliferation of low-quality journals (predatory journals) offering lucrative opportunities for researchers to publish their articles in no time [24]. As such, the research community questioned the very quality of Indian journals, given that the entire process of scholarly communication had been downgraded to accommodate very low-quality articles without plagiarism checks and to deviate from all sorts of publication ethics [25] On the other hand, these journals falsely portray a high impact factor, claim inclusion in major citation databases, and list internationally recognised experts on the editorial board. This trend in publication had a negative impact on the reputation of Indian research.

3. UGC's Efforts

It all started with the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India issuing 'Regulations on Minimum Qualifications for appointment of teachers and other academic staff in universities and colleges and measures for the maintenance of standards in higher education' in 2010. The regulation specifies a minimum score in the Academic Performance Indicators, based on PBAS, for direct recruitment as well as for promotion under CAS. One of the API parameters talks about research publications. It identifies three types of research papers Refereed journals, non refereed journals, and conference papers and each category carries specific weightage. Since no specific subject wise list of journals and periodicals was made available within six months, the clause was interpreted differently by each University and each selection committee, leading to greater confusion and chaos in addressing this problem. However, owing to suggestions received from various universities and on the recommendation, the Central Coordination Committee introduced the UGC List of approved journals in 2017.

The third amendment to the above regulations (2016) stipulates that a PhD candidate publish two research articles, one of which should be in a refereed journal, and that this work should be part of the PhD. The same regulation also changed the nomenclature of types of publications from 'Refereed journals' and 'non-refereed journals' to 'refereed journals, as notified by the UGC', and 'non-refereed journals', as notified by the UGC. This change was made as UGC was planning to introduce the 'UGC List of Approved Journals'.

The fourth amendment (2016) of the UGC regulations changed its stand on consideration of journals from its earlier stand (UGC Regulations 2010) "Besides the indexed publications documented by various discipline

specific databases, the University concerned shall draw through committee(s) of subject experts and ISBN/ ISSN experts : (a) a comprehensive list of National/Regional level journals of quality in the concerned subject(s); and (b) a comprehensive list of Indian language journals/periodicals/official publication volumes of language bodies and upload them on the University website which are to be updated periodically" to a stand (UGC regulations amendment 2016) "the University shall identify the journals subject wise through subject expert committees and forward the recommendations to UGC in the format prescribed by UGC for approval of the UGC Standing Committee. The journals approved from this list, by the UGC Standing Committee, shall be included in the "List of Journals" notified by the UGC. The UGC Standing Committee shall give its recommendations within 60 working days of the receipt of the list from the University. The UGC Standing Committee may also *suo motu* recommend journals for inclusion in the "List of Journals".

The Fourth Amendment also increased the weightage of refereed journals, as notified by the UGC. This led to tremendous demand for more journals to meet the needs of potential authors. The number of journals included in the list was 38,653 in January 2017 (UGC Letter D.O. No. F. 1-A2016 (PS/l) Amendment, 11th April 2017). Academics and researchers across the country questioned the very high number of journals approved by the UGC, as many predatory journals were also on this list. [27] called the proliferation of predatory journals a mockery of the entire process. Hence, the list was revised, and another list containing 33112 journals rejecting 5541 low quality journals was introduced [28].

In a study [29], it was found that 32,659 journals were listed, and that 88.9% of the 5,699 journals recommended by universities were dubious and did not meet standard requirements. Despite this major deletion, the list contained 84 predatory journals, of which 71 were active. The question of credibility and the inclusion of low-standard and predatory journals spoiled the very quality of the list [29]. Not only was the entire process of Indian research at stake, but the recruitment process had also had limited success (Paramik, Rai and Sharma, 2017), including the UGC's very reputation. Faced with multiple challenges in combating predatory journals, improving research quality, and providing a standard list of scholarly journals [31], UGC initiated two developments: amending the UGC regulations themselves and establishing CARE (Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics).

4. UGC–Care List

UGC regulation 2018 changed the types of research papers to be considered as either 'Peer reviewed or UGC listed journals' with a low API score compared to earlier UGC regulations. Like previous regulations, it also allowed augmenting journals' impact factors with additional weightage points. For the first time, the Thomson Reuters List was considered as the source for the impact factor.

UGC, through its quality mandate, established CARE (Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics) [32]in 2018 to align with global standards for high quality research. The UGC CARE Reference List of quality journals was introduced, replacing 'UGC List of approved journals', to serve as a reference for researchers and institutions to identify quality journals for publishing their work, ensuring adherence to ethical standards and promoting credible research [34] thereby enhancing the credibility of research publications, minimizing the problem of predatory journals, increasing the visibility of quality of articles in reputed journals.

Its origin can be traced to [35] Savitribai Phule Pune University's efforts to frame guidelines for research

publications in 2015, in response to UGC Regulations 2010 [35]. In particular, it is Prof Bhushan Patwardhan's initiatives at [35] Savitribai Phule Pune University as Chairman of the Centre for Publications Ethics, developing guidelines for Savitribai Phule Pune University, and later as UGC's Vice Chairman.

Initially, UGC CARE List comprised of 4 groups (UGC Letter No. F.1-1/2018 (Journal-CARE) January 14, 2019) Group A (Journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science), Group B (Verified from the old UGC list), Group C (Recommended by UGC Council Members) and Group D (Submitted by recognized Indian Universities). The list had 521 Group B, 47 Group C and 247 Group D journals in the initial phase and later moved to the existing 2 groups- Group I (Journals qualified through UGC CARE protocol) and Group II (Journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science).

UGCCAREhadawell-structuredorganisationsystem(https://ugccare.unipune.ac.in/Apps1/User/Web/About/). UGC CARE Empowered Committee monitored the functioning of UGC-CARE and governed the activities of the UGC Cell for Journal Analysis. It is observed that the UGC CARE had 31 members representing statutory bodies, councils, academics, and Government bodies. Four nodal universities and INFLIBNET were also members of the UGC CARE. UGC Cell for Journal Analysis was established at the Centre for Publication Ethics, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, with a faculty member of the University as its Coordinator.

The UGC CARE had also developed a journal analysis protocol, which was also displayed on the website. The list was dynamic in nature. There was a provision to include a new journal or to withdraw an undeserved journal through a procedure laid down by the UGC CARE. Despite this strong structure, the list had to be withdrawn within six years of its implementation in 2024. When UGC announced its closure, it had 252 journals in science, 320 in social science, 340 in arts & humanities, 16 multidisciplinary journals, and 282 in Indian language disciplines, in addition to accepting Scopus- and Web of Science-indexed journals (https://ugccare.unipune.ac.in/Apps1/User/WebA/Search).

5. What Went Wrong?

Many questions were raised by the media, academics, and other stakeholders the moment UGC announced the discontinuation of the UGC CARE List. Prominent among them were: why UGC had to discontinue the UGC CARE list of journals and recommend suggestive parameters [36]. What went wrong? Was the UGC in haste when it made the decision [37]. Will the proposed suggestive parameters lead to reforms in research [38]. A few academics also felt that the list was essential for maintaining standards [39].

In the beginning, the UGC CARE List was received by the academic community with applause [40]; Sau, 2020; [41] Over time, several criticisms were made of the list [42]. Nationalising an institutional practice without emphasising the country's diverse nature is a concern. Further,theempowermentCommittee(https://ugccare.unipune.ac.in/Apps1/User/Web/CareECMember) had three academicians associated with a single University. Added to it was the problem of establishing the Journal Analysis Cell and attaching it to the same University that already had three members in the Empowerment Committee, leading to bias.

Another concern was regarding the validity of the analysis protocol it had adopted for inclusion of journals in the list. It is found that the analysis protocol (https://ugccare.unipune.ac.in/Apps1/User/WebA/Protocol) comprises three parts: Part I - Basic, Part II - Primary, and Part III - Secondary criteria. The data included

under Part I was tangible and was easily available for verification. But parts II and III were intended for internal analysis conducted by a Cell within a University, coordinated by a coordinator. To carry out a journal analysis, subject experts and scientometricians/are required. Except for the Coordinator of the Cell, who was an LI professional, little is known about who conducted the internal analysis and how decisions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of a journal were made. This raised questions about the transparency the Cell adopted.

The process of making new submissions was also not free from objectivity, recognising four universities as the nodal agencies to recommend journals for all disciplines, without considering whether these Universities have all the postgraduate departments with the required expertise to recommend. They truly cannot represent the academic characteristics of the regions concerned, as none of them has expertise in all subjects. No doubt these four Universities have good NAAC and NIRF rankings, but that does not mean they can endorse new submission requests for all subjects requested by universities in their respective regions. For example, how the Central University of Hyderabad processes new submissions made for inclusion in journals in Kannada, Tamil, and Malayalam. The way language journals have been treated is another issue of serious concern [45] Recognising journals indexed in the Directory of Modern Language Association cannot be an answer to the problem faced by Indian language researchers who prefer to publish in their regional language journals, which will never be indexed by any international databases and by their very nature cannot fulfil the parameters of the CARE List.

Another concern was regarding the omission of quality journals in the field. For example, like 'Vidura' and 'Mass Communicator', which are leading journals in the Mass Communication discipline, but are not included in the UGC CARE list. The entire process of recommendation by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), submission to the nodal University, analysis by the Cell, and final approval or rejection by the Executive Committee took more time, causing delays. Added to it were other problems, like considering Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus as the 'only databases representing the published research'. This instilled a mindset that 'Do research in India but publish elsewhere' in a journal just because it is WoS- or Scopus-indexed, even though its visibility and applicability are less known in India. Of course, the main problem was treating non-STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines alongside STEM disciplines. For non-STEM disciplines, journals of Indian origin are more suitable, whereas STEM disciplines can publish their articles in Scopus- or WoS-indexed journals.

The point is whether the stated needs for establishing UGC CARE have been met. There is no evidence to prove that either the credibility of research publications increased, or the number of research articles published in reputed journals increased, or the problem of predatory journals was solved, or the percentage of research articles published in low quality, dubious, or substandard journals declined. Hence, the answer is 'NO,' paving the way for discontinuing the UGC CARE List and introducing suggestive parameters. Now the question is whether these suggestive parameters will bring about reforms or pose a risk to the quality image of Indian research [46].

7. Suggestive Parameters

The suggestive parameters as prescribed by UGC (F. No.:1-1/2018(CARE/JOURNAL) 16 July 2025) for quality journals have been categorised under eight groups. The first category Journal preliminary criteria list 9 points for consideration. These include the journal title, ISSN, periodicity and regularity, contact details,

transparent review policy, website on a certified domain, open access or subscription based policy, integration with national/international repositories, and archival policy. The editorial board's second criterion carries 3 points for consideration. These include details on the editorial board, its composition, and the editorial/ review process.

According to the journal's editorial policy, the third criterion is worth 5 points. Clearly defined focus areas and goals of the journal, Specific fields covered by the journal, article processing charges, publishing timeline and acceptance rate. Under the journal quality criteria for content, two factors require serious attention. The first is whether the articles demonstrate motivation, advance existing knowledge, or are applicable to policymaking. The second sub category concerns conformity with the journal's scope. The fifth category deals with journal standards. There are seven factors that require attention. These include: accurate and standardised referencing; font & design for readability and professional layout; use of high quality visuals and supplementary materials; citation record; consistency in print publication; quality of the website; and multilingual availability.

The sixth category is about research ethics and includes four factors. Ethical guidelines for authors, plagiarism detection, conflict of interest disclosure, and policy on AI-generated content. The seventh category, journal visibility, has two points for consideration. Impact factor and indexed in reputed databases. The last parameter, journal impact criteria, includes the self citation score, total citation rate, and *CiteScore*.

The public notice cited above suggests that the research community choose peer reviewed journals based on the suggested parameters and asks Universities to constitute internal review committees to tailor them to the research needs of the university, without compromising research standards. As such, the onus is on the Universities to decide on the quality of journals to be prescribed using these standards.

7. What is Required?

There are different stakeholders in the entire process of publishing scientific literature in journals. They include UGC and other apex bodies, including the ISSN awarding agency, Universities, various bodies such as the Board of Studies, Research Advisory Committees, IQAC, the research community, and publishers. Each one of them has its own role.

i. It can be seen that the UGC regulation 2010 (including first, second, third and fourth amendments) and 2018 have used the terms like high quality research publications, refereed journal, peer reviewed journal, indexed documents, impact factor, etc., without specifically giving a definition and positioning the scope of the terms except the usage of Thomson Reuters impact factor by 2018 regulations. It is for the UGC to properly define these terms so that universities can interpret them similarly.

ii. The UGC CARE list of journals is made available online for reference purposes. The journals listed in the existing list (Group 1) require further analysis by each university using the parameters suggested by the UGC by constituting internal committees for each subject. The committees shall include subject matter experts and LIS professionals with adequate knowledge of scientometric and bibliometric techniques. The committees shall also analyse journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus for their relevance and appropriateness for publication. If these parameters are interpreted objectively, this will help promote research integrity. Otherwise, it will take us back to a situation much worse than 2015.

iii. The ISSN number has been recognised as a mandatory element for considering it as a quality indicator by UGC regulations, NAAC, NIRF. Hence, the ISSN awarding agency in India, the National Science Library at CSIR-NIScPR, shall review all journals it has assigned ISSN/e-ISSN in light of the suggested parameters and, if required, modify its guidelines. The whole exercise will be of no use if the ISSN journal does not satisfy the suggested parameters.

iv. No researcher wants to publish his/her research work in a low quality or predatory journal. But the question is whether the researcher's work fits the scope of the peer reviewed journal. High-quality research is dependent on many factors like funding, infrastructure, facilities made available, content, style of writing, area of research chosen, methodology adopted, innovativeness, high quality data, rigorous analysis etc, Hence, considering research conducted by a college teacher and an IIT professor, research conducted at a newly created general university and age old research institutions on similar lines is not a welcome move as there exists a deep divide.

v. Another factor that requires serious concern is considering STEM and non STEM and language disciplines differently. Every research study has a specific scope and target audience and, as such, needs to be published accordingly. Demanding that every researcher publish their research in a particular journal or set of journals will undermine the very purpose of research reporting. This necessitates a range of research journals that are amenable to publishing research relevant to the target audience.

vi. What is required is to promote conducting research systematically among researchers. If a researcher conducts high quality research, their publication will naturally be accepted by a high quality journal. So, the obligation is on Universities to streamline the research process, create awareness in properly documenting and reporting the research, not finding ways to publish sub-standard research in high quality peer reviewed journals and finally ending with predatory journals and later making all efforts to put the low quality journal on par with other peer reviewed journals by subjectively analysing the suggestive parameters and finally blaming it on suggestive parameters.

vii. The Board of Studies and Research Advisory Committees are the grassroot-level monitoring bodies, and as such, they have to carefully observe the kind of research being conducted and suggest measures to improve the quality of work being conducted in the Universities. The internal review committees, as suggested by the UGC, must prepare a comprehensive list of journals that meet the specified parameters. They can also consider other international databases such as Scopus, WoS, and PubMed.

viii The Indian publishers who are involved in the publication of scientific journals are required to form a forum (Association of Editors of Indian Scholarly Journals) on similar lines to WAME to strengthen Indian research. The editors of the journals are required to adopt a robust peer review process with clear policies and guidelines. They are also required to meet all the suggested parameters and disclose them on their websites. The UGC CARE LIST has been discontinued, but UGC CARE remains. It shall act as COPE in the Indian context. Of course, the organisational structure requires complete revamping. It shall also include academicians, scientometricians/bibliometricians, and editors to provide broader coverage of all stakeholders.

ix. One of the most important tasks to be performed by UGC CARE at this juncture is protecting the research

community from predatory journals by regularly updating the list of predatory journals and cloned journals and communicating the same to all the higher education institutions.

x. The UGC, through CARE, shall initiate a Journal Rating System like the Journal Rating System of NAAS based on the compiled lists of all the Universities developed using suggestive parameters

xi. The accreditation agencies like NAAC and NBA, and ranking institutions NIRF, should arrive at a unified view on research publications. At present, they have a varied view on the consideration of journals. It is high time to strengthen Indian tools such as Indian Science Abstracts, Guide to Indian Periodical Literature, Index India, and Indian Citation Index so that India can develop its own indigenous databases. Further, the 'Directory of periodicals published in India' and Directory of Indian Scientific Periodicals' can be revised and updated using the suggested parameters of UGC.

xii. Institutions of higher education in India should mandatorily start a university journal by fulfilling all the suggested parameters and host it in open access or on their website to showcase the research being conducted at that respective university. This will surely reduce the psychological burden on the research community to find a non predatory, non cloned institutional journal. In conformity with the 'Make in India' programme, UGC can promote the 'Publish in India' campaign, as a significant share of research funding is published outside the country, leaving Indian journals very thin. This will also benefit the University by promoting quality research and enabling entry into DOAJ and, later, Scopus/WoS.

xiii. In addition to adopting the newly introduced parameters, universities may also consider instructing the Boards of Studies (BOS) of the respective departments to prepare a discipline specific list of credible and scholarly journals, which must then be reviewed and formally approved by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell. Such an approach will ensure that faculty members and research scholars are guided towards publishing in quality outlets that uphold academic integrity and global standards.

xiv. The IQAC of the universities have to develop a mechanism researchers have to submit details of the articles to which they intend to submit. The IQAC can investigate whether that journal does not figure under a cloned, predatory, dubious/suspected group. Only after its approval can the researchers communicate the article for publication. This will reduce the problem of predatory journals to a large extent.

xv. At the same time, there is a pressing need to provide regular training sessions for both research scholars and faculty on how to identify, evaluate, and select the most appropriate journals for publication. Despite repeated cautions, a considerable number of researchers continue to publish in predatory or pseudo-journals. These exploitative publishers, driven by profit rather than scholarly advancement, have emerged as a serious threat to the academic and research ecosystem, compromising quality, diluting credibility, and misleading early career researchers.

xvi To address this challenge, universities must not only regulate journal selection but also organise workshops, seminars, and orientation programmes dedicated to research and publication ethics. Such initiatives will foster awareness about the importance of academic honesty, peer review, originality, plagiarism checks, and the broader responsibilities of a scholar towards the scientific community. By strengthening structural mechanisms and capacity building efforts (through training and workshops), institutions can significantly

reduce the risk of predatory publishing and cultivate a culture of ethical, impactful, and globally visible research.

8. Conclusion

The University Grants Commission has now discontinued the UGC CARE List and, in its place, introduced a new set of suggestive parameters for universities to adopt. This shift clearly reflects a move from a centralised to a decentralised model of monitoring research quality. A single, standardised list of journals was never adequate to serve the diverse and evolving needs of higher education institutions (HEIs) in India, given their variations in disciplinary focus, institutional type, and levels of specialisation.

Indian HEIs are heterogeneous; there is a significant divide in institutional capacity, faculty strength, research culture, and infrastructure. Consequently, this divide is also reflected in the quality of research output and scholarly publications. By introducing suggestive parameters rather than a rigid list, UGC has sought to grant greater autonomy and responsibility to individual institutions. Each university will now have the flexibility to frame its own mechanisms, guided by these parameters, to promote ethical, credible, and high quality research publications.

This model also implies that quality assurance in research cannot be imposed by any single authority, statute, or publisher. Instead, it requires a shared and collaborative approach involving all stakeholders universities, faculty members, publishers, funding agencies, and policymakers. Reforms in research and publication practices can only be achieved when everyone participates with a sense of ownership and accountability.

However, this opportunity also comes with a risk. If the suggestive parameters are not implemented objectively and with seriousness, there remains the danger that low quality predatory journals will continue in the future, much as with the earlier UGC List of Approved Journals and the UGC CARE List. Such frequent policy reversals would cause further uncertainty and may damage the credibility of Indian research globally. Therefore, a balanced, collective, and objective approach is essential to ensure that this decentralised framework leads to meaningful and sustainable reforms in the Indian research ecosystem.

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