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J P Verma

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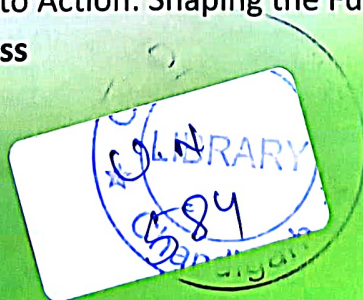
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From Knowledge to Action: Shaping the Future with Values
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Improving Citation Impact: A Roadmap for Indian Universities

J P Verma*

The Indian Context : Quantity Versus Quality

India's higher education system comprises over 1,100 universities, including 54 centrally funded institutions, representing a rich reservoir of academic potential. Despite the large research output, only a handful of institutions, such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and a few Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), regularly feature in global rankings like the QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education (THE), and ARWU. This signals a persistent disconnect between volume and impact.

The fundamental issue is not a lack of activity but a deficit in efficacy—specifically, the quality, visibility, and international relevance of much of the research produced (Gupta & Dhawan, 2006). A high quantity of publications is often undermined by poor methodological rigour, lack of innovation, or limited dissemination.

Although national investment in Research and Development (R&D) remains a concern—hovering around 0.6% of GDP compared to China's 2.1% and the U.S.'s 2.5% (DST, 2023)—this alone does not fully explain the limited citation impact. Even within current funding constraints, many Indian institutions have yet to institutionalise quality control mechanisms and strategic visibility efforts.

Studies by Basu and Garg (2019) emphasise that Indian universities often publish in lower-tier or regionally indexed journals with limited international readership, reducing citation potential. Additionally, poor research design, limited collaboration, and underutilization of digital dissemination platforms exacerbate the issue (Moed, 2017).

Thus, the crux of the problem lies not in underproduction but in underperformance relative to global standards of scholarly impact. Improving citation impact requires an institutional shift toward excellence in research methodology, interdisciplinary collaboration, and strategic dissemination rather than merely increasing publication counts.

The Importance of Citation Impact

The concept of citation impact is crucial in determining a university's position in global rankings and the perceived value of its research. Prominent international ranking systems like QS, Times Higher Education (THE), and ARWU assign significant weight to metrics related to research influence, which include the average number of citations per faculty or per publication. However, the importance of citation impact extends far beyond these rankings.

*Vice Chancellor, Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva Sports University, Chabua, Dibrugarh, Assam- 786003. E-mail: vermajprakash@gmail.com.