

## EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FACED BY PAKISTANI SCHOLARS AND RESEARCHERS IN PUBLISHING THEIR WORK

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### ABSTRACT

In Pakistani context publishing work is arduous mission for scholars and researchers and they often face publication challenges and barriers. Anyhow if they complete their research work it become pain striking for them to find a suitable HEC approved journal for publication because there are many fake publishers and journals on social media. The present research is an effort not only to unveil these challenges and barriers but also to find solutions. By using qualitative research method, the researchers randomly meet 360 participants from all areas of Pakistan and by using survey technique face-to-face asked seven close-ended and two open-ended questions for the purpose of data collection. The data was collected and presented in figures and tables. The research findings revealed many challenges and barriers and researchers tried to address these hurdles through this valuable research work. The researchers also give some recommendations for scholars and researchers, and pointed out that there is need to conduct more research studies regarding publication to facilitate young scholars and researchers.

**Keywords:** Academic publications, challenges & barriers, classifications & categories volumes & issues, charges policies, HJRS.

### INTRODUCTION

Publish or perish is generally accepted axiom in the contemporary age and academic publications has developed as a tool to measure the positions of professionals (Naz et al., 2022). Research publications have great importance in higher level educational system and it preforms leading part in bringing social revolution. The major purpose of demanding publication from the part of university is research evidence to evaluate itself and ranking of university increases due to the average of publications from the faculty members in the recognized journals (Hyland, 2016). The publication tendency is increasing day by day because each university desires to become high ranking university in the world and due to this race, universities professors are publishing their research works (Smith, 2007). Universities are selecting and promoting lecturers and professors on the base of

their research publications (Mittal et al., 2008; Miller et al., 2011; Chou & Chan, 2016). The frequency of research publications by Pakistani scholars and researchers was six hundred in 2003 increased to forty-three hundred in 2008. Presently more than forty-five thousand members of faculties and 1.4 million scholars are publishing their works, which are only 0.04% in the world while India share 20% worlds publications (Javed et al., 2020). Higher Education Commission of Pakistan for the vision of 2025 has declared to bring improvement in the research systems of the universities which is at the moment facing various challenges. Research publication is required to every faculty member to find high position and promotion in his department. Demand of work publications has increased and linkage of publications with promotions and selections in faculties is challenging for faculty

members. So, research publications have become basic need of all faculty members.

Research article publication in a reliable journal is a most important challenge universally encountered by scholars and researchers. The status of research publications in higher educational system cannot be disregarded because it performs central part in higher level education. So, young scholars must take responsibilities in their academic careers to contribute their faculties by their excellent research publications. In the present research work the researchers mainly focused on the problems and difficulties commonly faced by young scholars in academic research publications. The researchers have made an effort to highlight these barriers and additionally this research work will suggest cogent solutions of the related problem. From the previous twenty years there is trend extensively seen among the professors and scholars to publish their research work to develop themselves as a well-known researcher. This phenomenon is almost is found in all around the world, similarly Pakistan which is a developing country both professors and scholars are publishing their research work for their best future academic carrier.

### **Problem Statement**

Research publication has become a challenging issue both for teachers and students, if anyhow they write research article or research paper then it became a challenge for them to find a journal to publish their research paper. The owners of journals are demanding large amount for research papers publications which is unaffordable for many scholars. On the other side if they are able to manage charges then it becomes challenging for them to find HEC approved journals. In the developing country like Pakistan there are many unapproved journals publishing and wasting the works of the scholars who are unaware about the fact that these are not HEC approved journals. The researchers have tried to find the solutions of these problems through this valuable research work.

### **Research Objectives**

The prime objective of this research work is to find the publication challenges and barriers which are faced by Pakistani scholars while searching suitable HEC approved journals for publishing their work.

This is a pain striking problem which was always unnoticed by the previous researchers. The researchers of the present study observed this problem that many young scholars even they noted that faculties members were also facing problems and difficulties in finding affordable and HEC approved journals. The secondary objective of the present research study was to find the solutions of these challenges and barriers to facilitate Pakistani scholars and researchers in publishing works. For the purpose of finding these objectives the following two research questions were developed by the researchers.

### **Research Questions**

- I. What challenges and barriers Pakistani scholars and researchers face in publications?
- II. How Pakistani scholars and researchers can overcome these challenges and barriers?

### **Research Limitations**

The present research work is conducted in the context of Pakistan disregarding continental and international context. The population and sampling are also limited to the scholars of English department which is ignoring the scholars of the other departments. One more limitation is that in this research study professors are totally ignored by the researchers while the professors are also facing same kind of barriers in their research publications. Sample size is also limited only to 360 scholars and researchers it can be increased. The questionnaire used in this research work for the purpose of data collection has also some limitations as the frequency of close-ended and open-ended questions can be increased to find better results. One more limit is found in this research study is that the researchers by using random sampling technique face-to-face meet scholars and researchers for the purpose of data collection while they can select purposive sample and also can take advantage of new technology by sending this questionnaire to the selected participants by using social media platform as Email, WhatsApp etc. Instead of all these limitations this research is significant.

### **Research Significance**

This research work is remarkable in itself as it finds the problems and issues in research publications and provides the solutions of these problems which will prove helping and beneficial not only for the scholars and professors of contemporary age but also for the researchers of future generations. The researchers have provided all important details about the research publication in this substantial work which have made the task of researchers easy and they will be able to find their required HEC approved publication journals effortlessly. All details about the journals categories, and how to check journals from HJRS are discussed in detail. Furthermore, the kinds of journals are also mentioned as it is quarterly, biannual, or annually published journal. Moreover, the details about the charges policies are also mentioned as there are three types of journals fully funded journals, partial funded, and paid journals. There is no single research which has presented details so vividly as presented in this research work which makes it a masterpiece work in the realm of research works.

### **Literature Review**

This part of the research article covering literature review which encompasses introduction academic journals, volumes and issues of journals, charges policies of journals, classifications and categories of journals, HEC Journals Reorganization System (HJRS), and some previous research studies related to the present study, followed by research gap.

### **Academic Journals**

Academic journals correspondingly denoted scholarly, scientific, peer-reviewed journals is a publication which comprises articles penned by professionals in their specific fields. Conley (2012) while giving a statement about academic journals claimed that their main purposes are as fostering communications among researchers by providing evident base for applied and theoretic ideology in the form of documents evolving scientific evidence. The research articles and research papers are the works of scholars and researchers which are generally published in the academic journals (Amusan & Olanisimi, 2011).

### **Journals Volumes and Issues**

Volume refers to the number of years the publication has been circulated while the issue refers to how many times that journal has been published in a year. Usage of volumes and issues numbers in a journal serve to recognize different volumes and issues in their sequences. Commonly, volume covers the published issues of whole year.

There are mainly three types of journals regarding issues known as quarterly published journals, biannual published journals, and annual published journals.

1. Quarterly journals publish four issues per year and each of the issue contains on three months period. First issue contains on the months from January to March, second issue from April to June, third issue from July to September and fourth issue from October to December.
2. Biannual journals publish two issues per year and each issue contains on six months period. First issue starts from January and ends in June while the second issue starts from July and ends in December.
3. Annual journals publish one issue per year, these kinds of journals mostly publish research papers in the last month of the year.

### **Journals Charges Policy**

There are three types of journals regarding charges policy which are categorized as totally paid journals, partial funded journals and totally free or funded journals. The first type of journals which charges full fee are known as fully paid journals because the authors publish his/her research article or research paper by paying full charges to the publishers of these journals. The second type is known as partial funded journals which publish research article or research paper in half charges or as they specified charges policy on their website for instance as on 50% or 60% charges etc. The last type of journals regarding charges are totally funded journals which publish paper totally free of cost and charge no publication fee from the authors. These journals are funded by the government, HEC, or from different private educational organizations and private institutes and universities.

### Journals Classifications and Categories

Higher Education Commission of Pakistan classified publication journals into four categories as W, X, Y, and Z categories. Pakistanis are far behind in the field of research and publication, so Pakistani scholars and researchers must benefit their faculties through their research publications, they must try to publish in best categories journals by standardizing their research works (Ali, 2020).

### Publication journals are classified in into W, X, Y, and Z categories.

1. Category W journals are the highest ranked journals and poses first place in journals categories. This category of journal qualifies to the HEC requirements for approvals and get large amount of funds, moreover, the W categories journals provide more academic benefits to the scholars, researchers and faculty members.
2. Category X journals are fulfilling extra valued standard and can obtain bigger funds than Y categories journals.
3. Category Y journals are fulfilling minimum standard of criteria and qualify to get some funds to find the level of X category journals.
4. Category Z journals are the last acceptable category. This is not good category but acceptable for ESL/EFL learners.

### HEC Journals Recognition System (HJRS)

The federal government of Pakistan established Higher Education Commission abbreviated as (HEC) in 2002 its main purpose was to bring improvement in higher education (Naz, Umair & Noureen, 2022). Higher Education Commission of Pakistan is taking serious steps to promote Pakistani higher education to international level standard by providing funds and regulating it (Qureshi et al., 2014). Scholars and researchers in Pakistan want to publish their work in HEC approved journals because academically it creates good impact (Ali, 2020). For the purpose of encouraging research publications Higher Education Commission of Pakistan is facilitating scholars and researchers in different ways, and for this purpose, "Journals Recognition System" (HJRS) was launched.

HEC Journals Recognition System abbreviated as (HJRS) is a website launched by the HEC to facilitate

professors and scholars, from this website they must check the required journal in which they are publishing their research article/paper. The processes of checking are very simple and easy first of all type HJRS on Google HEC journals recognition system (HJRS) website will open from the window by selecting the required year enter name of the journal and then enter online ISSN number and click on find journal, it will show that the journal is recognized or not by the HEC. If journal is available on HJRS then we must go for publication otherwise left this one. In this way HJRS is a useful website which informs us about the fake and unregistered journals. Authors can also search discipline wise journals from the HJRS website. For more details see figure number two blew.

### Figure: 01 & 02

HEC Journals Recognition System (HJRS)  
HJRS Website



### Discipline Wise Search



**Source:** (<https://google.com>).

In the figure number one, firstly, click on three lines in the above right corner, secondly, from the dropdown list select your required year for instance 2023-24 or any other, thirdly, click journal search, fourthly enter journal name, fifthly enter online ISSN number, lastly in red area click on find journal. It will show you all details about journal including category, recognition, and publisher name. If you will click on discipline wise search a window will open as showed in the right-side in the figure number two, firstly, add your area name for instance Arts and Humanities or any other, secondly, select Language and Linguistics, thirdly, in HJRS category select category from dropdown list. lastly in red area click on refresh it will show the list of HEC recognized journals related to the inquired field.

### **Previous Related Studies**

In the international and continental context different researchers has conducted researches related to the present research study to some extent as Braine, (2005) investigated the publication challenges which scholars and researchers often faced. This research was conducted in the context of Hong Kong and find many publication challenges. Amusan & Olanisimi, (2011) studied the challenges and problems in academic journals publications in Nigerian context and the results displayed that scholars and researchers are facing various challenges and problems in research publications. Bukaliya & Muyengwa, (2012) analyzed the challenges which were affecting faculty in research and publication works. This research work was done in a Zimbabwean open university. Xiao & Askin, (2012) in their research study explored the role of a famous website Wikipedia in academical publications by highlighting its benefits and problems. The results proved its beneficial site for academical publications. Abdul, (2017) in his research study explored contemporary tendencies in academic writings and publication in Indian context by analyzing 50 written works, and Siler, in (2017) highlighted the future challenges and opportunities in academic publishing the results showed that contemporary system of publication facing various challenges. Zheng & Guo, in (2019) in his research study explored the academic publication challenges in English language faced by the local scholars of China. Olajuwon et al., (2023) in a case study in

Nigerian context observed the challenges of high impact research publishing in African continent. The major finding of the study disclosed that publish research article or research paper in high impact journal is pride of researcher and his institute as it increases his fame.

In the Pakistani context only one research work is conducted on the provincial level in Punjab not only disregarding national level of Pakistan but also ignoring other provinces of Pakistan, as Naz, Umair & Noureen in (2022) in a case study analyzed the challenges of academic publishing at provincial level in Punjab and examined that how Pakistani researchers face difficulties in international marketplace. The process of data collection was completed by means of interviewing. The results of the research highlighted that the growing pressure to publications and professional restrictions met by faculty members in the method of publications upsetting their general intelligence and excellent effort.

But in Pakistan there is even no single research which has explored the publication challenges and barriers in publishing work. The researchers find this gap and tried to fill this gap not only by exploring but also presenting solutions of these publication challenges and barriers.

### **Material and Methods**

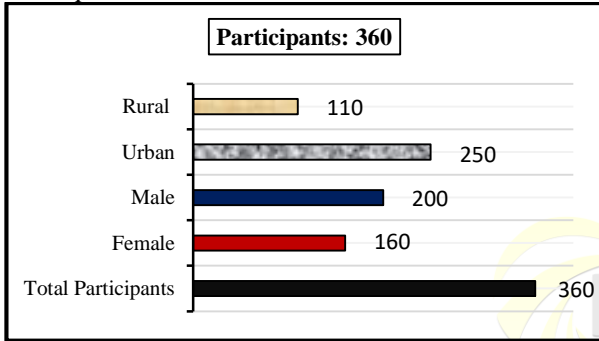
This part of the article contains on the material and methods which were used in the present research work. *“The methodical study of the procedure is called the research method”* (Ahmad, Shahid & Farhat, 2023). Research methods comprises research design, research population, research sample, research instrument followed by process of data collection and data analysis. Research design includes entire process used in research study (Ahmad, Farhat & Choudhary, 2022). In this qualitative research, by using survey technique the researchers face-to-face meet the 360 randomly selected Pakistani research participants and asked seven close-ended and two open-ended questions for the purpose of data collection. The collected data was analyzed by using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in tables, graphs.

**Research Findings**

This part of the article informs about the findings of the present research work, the demographic information, the responses of the close-ended questions, the responses of open-ended questions, are presented followed by discussion about the results and findings of present research. The questionnaire which was used to collect data was contains on three parts, as part one provides information about the demographic information of the participants which includes locality and gender of the participants who participated in this research work.

**Figure: 03**

*Demographic Information of the Research Participants*



The demographic information comprises the gender and location of the contributors (Rao, Jeevan & Ahmad, 2023). The figure number three above presenting the demographic information of the research participants as the total frequency of the participants was 360 scholars and researchers from Pakistan. The first two bars in the figure are showing the locality of participants as the 110 participants belong to the different rural areas whereas the 250 participants belong to the urban areas of Pakistan. The third and fourth bars are showing the gender of the participants as the 200 were male and the 160 were female scholars and researchers from Pakistan. The last bar is showing the total frequency of the research participants who contributed in this research.

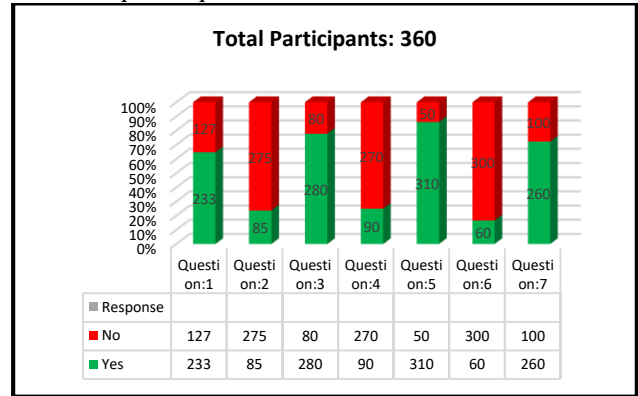
**Close-ended Questions**

To find the answer of the first research question the researchers in a face-to-face survey asked seven close-ended and one open-ended question from the 360 research participants. The results of the close-ended questions are presented in the following

graphs in figure number four. While the results of the first open-ended question are presented in table number one.

**Figure: 04**

*Responses of ten close-ended questions from 360 research participants.*



Firstly, the participants were asked **“Do you face challenges and barriers in publishing work?”** from the total 360 participants the 127 participants responded negatively and the 233 responded positively which points out that most of the participants face challenges and barriers in publishing their work. Secondly, the participants were asked **“Do you find HEC approved journal easily?”** the response of the 275 participants was in no and the 85 in yes which means that maximum of the scholars and researchers faces difficulties in finding HEC approved journals. Thirdly, participants were asked **“Do you have awareness about the Issue in which you are publishing?”** in the response of this statement the 80 participants disagreed and the 280 agreed which shows that mostly the scholars and researchers were aware about issues in which they are publishing their research work. Fourthly, participants were asked **“Do you know about HEC Journals Recognition System (HJRS)?”** the 270 responses in no and the 90 responses in yes which displays that maximum participants were unaware about HJRS and its usage. Fifthly, participants were questioned **“Do you know about the category of journal in which you are publishing?”** in response of this statement the 310 said yes and the 50 said no which show that maximum participants were aware about journals categories. Sixthly, participants were asked **“Do you know about charges policy in which you are publishing?”** response of this

statement the 60 said yes and the 300 said no which demonstrated that the majority of the participants was unaware about journals charges policies. Lastly, participants were questioned that “Submitting article on journal’s website is challenging?” responding the last question the 260 replied positively and the other 100 negatively, which showed that submitting article is challenging for maximum of the scholars and researchers.

**Open-ended Questions**

The researchers also face-to-face asked two open-ended questions from 360 research participants. First open-end question related to the first research question, while the second open-ended question was asked to find the answer of second research question. The results of both these open-ended questions are presented in the following tables respectively.

**Table: 01**  
 Which Kinds of Challenges and Barriers You Faced?

Extracts from participants responses	Minor Themes	Major Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Never faced any challenge and barrier.</li> <li>Finding suitable journal.</li> <li>Searching journals from google.</li> <li>Find journal related to the subject.</li> <li>Avoiding from fake publishers.</li> <li>Journal charges policies.</li> <li>How to know when submission is opening?</li> <li>Finding affordable journal.</li> <li>Finding fully funded publication journals.</li> <li>Finding partial funded journals.</li> </ul>	Problems related to Journals.	Publications Challenges and Barriers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finding information about journal from website.</li> <li>Uploading or submitting article.</li> <li>Checking journal from HJRS.</li> </ul>	website and Operating Issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unaffordable charges of paid journals.</li> </ul>	Financial Issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long review process.</li> </ul>	Time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of rejection.</li> </ul>	Uncertainty	

In the response of first open-ended question the sixty participants responded that they never faced any kind of challenge and barrier in publishing their research work while the three hundred scholars and

researchers responded that they face different kinds of challenges and barriers in publishing their research work. These challenges and barriers which they mentioned in their responses are presented in table number one above. The respondents pointed out sixteen types of challenges and barriers, these barriers lead to five minor themes and these five minor themes lead to the one major theme which is challenges and barriers faced by Pakistani scholars and researchers in publishing their work.

**Table: 02**  
 How to overcome these challenges and barriers?

Extracts from participants responses	Minor themes	Major theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find suitable journal with the help of professors.</li> <li>Find journal with the help of class fellows and friends.</li> <li>By searching journals from google.</li> <li>They must prepare a list of approved journals related to their field.</li> </ul>	Solutions related to journals problems.	Solutions of these challenges and barriers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn use of internet and website.</li> <li>Learn use of laptop and devices.</li> </ul>	Solutions of website and operating issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By uploading article on fully funded journal.</li> <li>By uploading article on partial funded journal.</li> <li>All authors share equally to publish in paid journal.</li> </ul>	Solutions of financial issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To avoid from long review process of annual and biannual issues, I prefer to publish in quarterly journals which publish four issues per year.</li> </ul>	Solutions of timing issue	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write top class research article or paper there will be fewer chances of rejection.</li> <li>To avoid from rejection scholars must check their work to their professors before uploading on the journal’s website.</li> </ul>	Solutions to avoid from uncertainty	

To find the answer of the second research question the researchers asked participants how they overcome the challenges and barriers which they face in publishing their work. The participants in their responses suggested some solutions of overcoming these challenges and barriers these are presented in the table two above. The respondents pointed out twelve types of solutions which lead to five minor

themes and these five minor themes lead to the major theme which is solutions of these challenges and barriers faced by Pakistani scholars and researchers in publishing their work.

### **DISCUSSION**

The main purpose of conducting this research work was that in Pakistan scholars and researchers face different kinds of difficulties and problems in finding reliable sources to publish their research work. The researchers perceived that in Pakistani context it has become a problematic issue for authors to publish their work so they decided to conduct research to find the solution this problem. To find the answer of the first research question researchers asked seven close-ended and one open-ended questions while the second open-ended question was asked to find the answer of second research question.

While responding the seven close-ended questions. The researchers find that majority of Pakistani authors not only face publications challenges and barriers but also faces difficulties in submitting article and in finding HEC approved journals because they were unaware about HJRS and its usage. Mostly the scholars and researchers have awareness about issues and journals categories but the mainstream of the participants was unaware about journals charges policies. The findings of the first open-ended question revealed that almost 17% authors never faced any kind of challenge and barrier while more than 83% authors pointed out sixteen types of challenges and barriers which they often faced in publishing their research work. These barriers lead to five minor themes and these five minor themes lead to the major theme which is challenges and barriers faced by Pakistani scholars and researchers in publishing their work.

Responding the second open-ended question the research participants from their experience offered twelve kinds of solutions which they tried to solve these problems. These solutions are presented in the table number two these solutions leading to five minor themes and these minor themes are leading to one major theme which solutions of these challenges and barriers.

Some results of the present study match to the results of the researches conducted on international level by different researchers in their milieu (Braine, 2005; Amusan & Olanisimi, 2011; Bukaliya & Muyengwa,

2012; Xiao & Askin, 2012; Abdul, 2017; Siler, 2017; Zheng & Guo, 2019; Olujuwon et al., 2023). In the Pakistani context only one research work was conducted by Naz, Umair and Noureen in (2022) in this case study they analyzed the challenges of academic publishing at provincial level in Punjab and examined that how Pakistani researchers face difficulties in international marketplace.

But there is no single research in Pakistani context which explored the publication challenges and barriers. So, this is first study in Pakistani context in this regard, and it will prove beneficial not only for Pakistani scholars and researchers but also for the scholars and researchers of other countries.

### **CONCLUSION**

Academic publication is genuine universal movement including numerous publishers' countless scholars and researchers in many international universities. Articles publications is a stimulating and prolific consequence of laborious work achieved by authors. Author dedicates long time and energy in finalizing his document with anticipation to publish his work in reputable journal but often he faces publication challenges and barriers which indulge his expectations. The present research work is an effort from the researchers' side to explore the publication challenges and barriers in Pakistani context and suggested some solutions to overcome these challenges. In the developed countries publication hurdles are fewer because there are many kinds of facilities are provided to the authors which makes their task easy. But in the developing countries like Pakistan scholars and researchers faces various hurdles in publishing their work. This work will prove helping in reducing these challenges and barriers which are preventing Pakistani scholars and researchers to publish their articles and research papers in trustworthy and HEC approved publication journals.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To find journals scholars and researchers must search journals from HJRS website by discipline wise search as mentioned in the figure number two.
- If any publisher share with you names of any journal you must check this from HJRS website by selecting year and then adding



name and ISSN number. It will clearly show you whether journal is approved or not by HEC Journals Recognition System (HJRS). See details in the figure number two.

- In Pakistan deficiency of funds is major problem the government and NGOs should come forward and provide funds for development of publications. It's clear from the replies that attainment of research subsidy is a great challenge.
- Scholars and researchers are publishing their work by paying high amount for publications, to solve this problem researchers suggested that they must publish in fully funded or partial funded journal, while publishing in a paid journal authors must share charges equally to avoid burden.
- The researchers suggested that while dealing with the publishers, authors must ask for discount, moreover scholars and researchers must develop coordination between themselves and try to publish their articles together from publisher to get more discount.
- Lacking requirement of advance English language is a main hurdle in the way of publishing in W or X category international journals. So, the scholars and researchers must develop their English language skill to advance level.
- To avoid from long waiting the scholars and publishers must publish their research work in quarterly published journals as these journals publishes four issues per year January to march, April to June, July to September, and October to December.
- To overcome on operating challenge the scholars and researchers must learn proper use of internet and electrical devices.

The researchers must conduct more researches in Pakistani context regarding publication challenges and barriers to solve the problem of Pakistani scholars and researchers.

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