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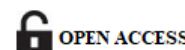
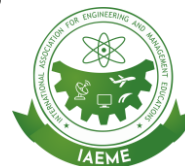
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COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT RISKS IN OPEN ACCESS ELECTRONIC JOURNALS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - Open access electronic journals have transformed scholarly communication by providing unrestricted access to research outputs. However, the increased accessibility and dissemination of digital content have also heightened the risk of copyright infringement. This study examines the major copyright infringement risks associated with open access electronic journals and evaluates their implications for authors, publishers, and academic institutions.

Design/methodology/approach - The study adopts a qualitative research methodology based on a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, copyright laws, open access policies, licensing frameworks, and publishing practices. Relevant academic sources were analyzed to identify key infringement risks and emerging challenges within open access publishing environments.

Findings - The findings indicate that unauthorized reproduction, improper content reuse, plagiarism, licensing violations, image misuse, and data ownership disputes represent the most significant copyright risks in open access electronic journals. While open access enhances knowledge dissemination, inadequate awareness of copyright obligations often contributes to legal and ethical concerns.

Practical implications - *The study provides guidance for publishers, editors, researchers, librarians, and policymakers regarding copyright compliance and risk mitigation strategies. Strengthening licensing awareness and copyright governance can reduce infringement risks while supporting sustainable open access publishing.*

Originality/value - *This paper contributes to the growing literature on copyright protection in digital publishing by examining infringement risks specific to open access electronic journals and proposing practical measures to enhance legal compliance.*

Keywords: Copyright Infringement, Open Access Journals, Electronic Publishing, Intellectual Property Rights, Creative Commons Licensing, Scholarly Communication, Research Ethics, Digital Publishing

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1. Introduction

The development of open access (OA) publishing has significantly transformed scholarly communication by enabling unrestricted access to research outputs through digital platforms. Unlike traditional subscription-based publishing models, open access journals allow readers to access, download, share, and utilize scholarly content without financial barriers. This model has contributed substantially to the democratization of knowledge and the global dissemination of research findings 1,2.

The rapid growth of open access publishing has been driven by technological advancements, institutional mandates, funding agency requirements, and international initiatives such as the Budapest Open Access Initiative, the Berlin Declaration, and UNESCO's Open Science Recommendation. These developments have increased the visibility and accessibility of scientific literature while fostering greater collaboration among researchers worldwide 3.

Despite these advantages, open access publishing has introduced new legal challenges concerning copyright protection and intellectual property rights. The digital nature of open access content facilitates rapid reproduction and redistribution, increasing the likelihood of

unauthorized use. Authors and publishers often face difficulties in monitoring and controlling the reuse of published materials across multiple online platforms 4.

Copyright infringement occurs when protected works are reproduced, distributed, displayed, or adapted without authorization or in violation of licensing terms. In open access environments, misunderstandings regarding licensing permissions frequently contribute to infringement incidents. Users may incorrectly assume that open access content is free from copyright restrictions simply because it is freely accessible online 5.

The growing prevalence of digital repositories, academic networking sites, preprint servers, and content-sharing platforms has further complicated copyright enforcement. Consequently, understanding copyright infringement risks in open access electronic journals has become increasingly important for maintaining the integrity and sustainability of scholarly publishing.

This study examines major copyright infringement risks associated with open access journals, analyzes their causes and implications, and proposes strategies for strengthening copyright compliance and legal protection within digital scholarly communication systems.

2. Literature Review

Open access publishing has been widely discussed in relation to copyright management and intellectual property protection. Suber (2012) 1 described open access as a mechanism for providing unrestricted access to scholarly literature while preserving author rights. Swan (2012) 2 emphasized that copyright remains a fundamental component of open access publishing despite the removal of access barriers. Scheufen (2015) 3 examined the relationship between copyright protection and open access dissemination, highlighting tensions between knowledge sharing and intellectual property rights.

Several scholars have investigated copyright infringement within digital publishing environments. Lessig (2004) 4 argued that digital technologies challenge traditional copyright enforcement mechanisms. Crews (2016) 5 discussed licensing complexities associated with scholarly communication and open access publishing. Koutras (2020) 6 examined legal challenges arising from copyright and open access policies. Recent studies published during 2026 15 indicate that copyright infringement risks continue to evolve due to increasing digital dissemination, content-sharing platforms, and emerging artificial intelligence technologies.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. Examine copyright infringement risks in open access electronic journals.
2. Analyze factors contributing to unauthorized use of scholarly content.
3. Investigate legal and ethical implications of copyright violations.
4. Evaluate the role of licensing frameworks in risk mitigation.
5. Recommend strategies for improving copyright compliance.

4. Copyright Protection in Open Access Publishing

Copyright protection grants creators exclusive rights over the reproduction, distribution, adaptation, and communication of their works. In scholarly publishing, copyright ensures that authors receive recognition and maintain control over the use of their intellectual contributions. Open access publishing does not eliminate copyright protection; rather, it modifies the conditions under which content may be accessed and reused 3.

Most open access journals employ Creative Commons licenses that define permissible uses of published content. These licenses provide legal clarity regarding reuse rights while preserving author attribution requirements. However, varying license conditions may create confusion among users unfamiliar with copyright regulations, thereby increasing the risk of infringement.

5. Major Copyright Infringement Risks in Open Access Journals

Unauthorized reproduction represents one of the most common forms of copyright infringement in open access environments. Users may copy, distribute, or republish scholarly content without complying with applicable licensing requirements. Such activities may occur on websites, repositories, educational platforms, or commercial services 6.

Another significant risk involves improper content reuse. Authors, students, and organizations may reproduce portions of published works without providing appropriate attribution or obtaining necessary permissions. Similarly, plagiarism and text duplication remain persistent concerns within scholarly communication despite the availability of plagiarism detection technologies.

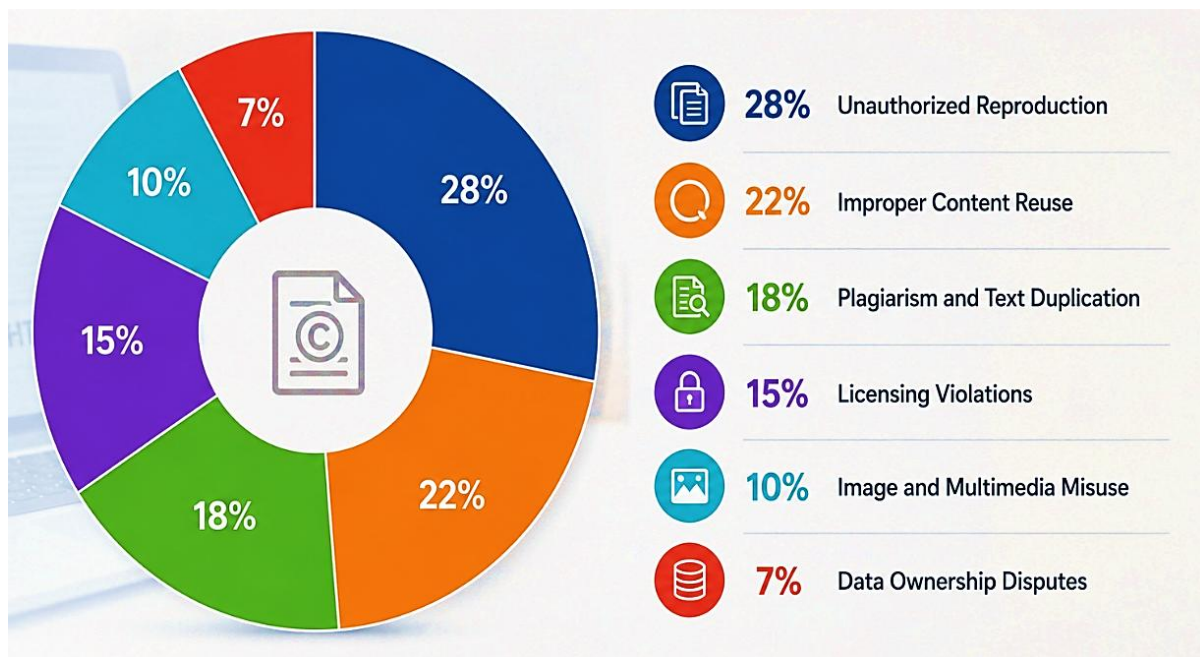
Image and multimedia misuse also present important challenges. Figures, tables, photographs, and graphical content are frequently reused without authorization or acknowledgment. Furthermore, research data associated with open access publications may generate disputes concerning ownership, licensing, and permissible reuse.

Table 1. Major Copyright Infringement Risks in Open Access Electronic Journals

Risk Category	Description	Potential Impact
Unauthorized Reproduction	Copying and redistribution without permission	Legal disputes
Improper Content Reuse	Reuse without attribution	Ethical violations
Plagiarism	Unacknowledged use of content	Loss of credibility
Licensing Violations	Non-compliance with license terms	Copyright claims
Image Misuse	Unauthorized use of figures and graphics	Intellectual property disputes
Data Ownership Conflicts	Disputes regarding research data	Legal uncertainty

Explanation:

Table 1 summarizes the primary copyright infringement risks affecting open access electronic journals. These risks have legal, ethical, and reputational implications for authors, publishers, and research institutions.

**Figure 1. Distribution of Major Copyright Infringement Risks in Open Access Electronic Journals**

Explanation:

Figure 1 shows the relative distribution of copyright infringement risks in open access electronic journals. Unauthorized reproduction and improper content reuse constitute the most prevalent challenges, highlighting the need for stronger copyright awareness and licensing compliance mechanisms.

6. Legal and Ethical Implications

Copyright infringement may result in legal liabilities, reputational damage, and financial losses for authors and publishers. Unauthorized use of scholarly content may lead to copyright claims, takedown requests, and litigation. In some cases, infringement may also undermine trust in scholarly communication systems and reduce incentives for research dissemination 7.

Ethically, copyright violations conflict with principles of academic integrity and responsible scholarship. Proper attribution and respect for intellectual property rights are essential components of scholarly communication. Failure to comply with copyright obligations may weaken the credibility of academic institutions and publishing organizations.

7. Role of Licensing Frameworks

Creative Commons licenses play a central role in regulating content reuse within open access publishing. These licenses specify conditions relating to attribution, non-commercial use, derivative works, and sharing requirements. Proper implementation of licensing frameworks can significantly reduce copyright misunderstandings and infringement risks 8.

Publishers increasingly provide detailed licensing information to assist users in understanding permissible uses of scholarly content. Educational initiatives, author training programs, and copyright awareness campaigns further contribute to improved compliance and responsible content reuse.

8. Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that copyright infringement remains a significant challenge despite the widespread adoption of open access publishing. The accessibility of digital content increases opportunities for unauthorized reproduction and misuse. While open access promotes knowledge dissemination, effective copyright governance remains essential for protecting author rights and maintaining publishing integrity.

The findings also highlight the importance of licensing frameworks in reducing infringement risks. Clear licensing terms, educational initiatives, and technological monitoring tools can help balance openness with copyright protection. Collaborative efforts among publishers, institutions, and policymakers are necessary for developing sustainable copyright management strategies.

9. Conclusion

Open access electronic journals have expanded access to scholarly knowledge and enhanced global research dissemination. However, the increased availability of digital content has also heightened copyright infringement risks. Unauthorized reproduction, improper reuse, plagiarism, licensing violations, image misuse, and data ownership disputes remain major concerns within open access publishing environments.

The study concludes that strengthening copyright awareness, improving licensing compliance, and implementing effective governance mechanisms are essential for mitigating infringement risks. Such measures can support the continued growth of open access publishing while preserving intellectual property rights and scholarly integrity.

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Editorial Comment

This article was peer reviewed under a double-blind review process in accordance with the journal's editorial policies.

Review: This paper addresses an important legal issue within contemporary scholarly communication by examining copyright infringement risks in open access electronic journals. The manuscript provides a comprehensive discussion of copyright protection, licensing frameworks, and infringement challenges while maintaining a balanced perspective on the benefits of open access publishing. The literature review is well-developed and incorporates both foundational and recent scholarship. The inclusion of a risk distribution chart and comparative table strengthens the presentation of findings. The conclusions are supported by the analysis and offer practical recommendations for publishers, researchers, and policymakers.

Overall, the paper makes a valuable contribution to the literature and is suitable for publication after minor editorial revisions.

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