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One Nation One Subscription (ONOS): Importance, Challenges, and Possibilities in the Indian Context

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Abstract

The 21st -century knowledge-based world has made information and digital resources the most treasured resources to the development of any nation. Modern education, higher level of research, and innovation can only develop when equal access to quality information resources is given to all educational institutions. In a country so large and diverse as India with so many institutions of higher learning, lack of equality of access to international research materials is an acute problem. The small number of universities, colleges and rural institutions or institutions that are not able to afford the cost of using expensive digital databases, research journals and e-resources. Consequently, good research and scientific knowledge throughout the world have continued to be in the hands of few elite institutions. One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) policy is designed to fill this gap by letting the national agreements with publishers allow access to scholarly materials centrally. In this paper, I will review how the democratization of digital resources can be used to empower the research traditions and transition India to the knowledge-based economy.

Keywords Knowledge Accessibility, Educational Equality, Digital Resources, One Nation One Subscription (ONOS), Digital Divide, Research Quality.

1. Introduction:

The quick development of digital technologies has turned the process of creating, accessing, and sharing knowledge upside down. Access to quality research databases, journals and e-resources is crucial to academic excellence in contemporary educational systems. Although India has many institutions of higher learning, academic resources are not very equal and evenly distributed. The big institutions have wide accessibility, and small and rural institutions would be disadvantaged due to inadequate financial resources.

The One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) is a form of policy of the Government of India aimed at playing a level playing field between all students and researchers. By changing to a collective national approach of switching individual institutional subscriptions to collective approach, India will be able to capitalize on its huge academic population so as to strike better deals with other global publishing giants. To ensure equality in education and give equal opportunities to students irrespective of geographic and financial status, it is crucial to ensure universal access to knowledge resources.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

The idea of fair access to knowledge has undergone a drastic transformation in the last 20 years, largely inspired by the Open Access Movement. This trend was born out of the increasing prices of academic journals and accessibility to academic publications. It stresses that knowledge is a social good and not a commercial commodity.

2.1 Global Knowledge Economy.

The world surveys conducted by the World Bank (2023) and other researchers have shown that the extent of innovation and research productivity usually goes higher in those countries where academic resources are accessed more rapidly. Democratization of knowledge is a direct step towards creation of a knowledge economy. Such scholars as Amartya Sen have stressed that access to information is itself a freedom. Therefore, the concern of access to the sources of knowledge is not merely an academic requirement and a socio-economic one.

2.2 Existing Indian Frameworks

In India, initiatives have been undertaken by schemes like e-ShodhSindhu, UGC-INFONET, whereby digital resources are availed to chosen institutions. These initiatives, however, are small scale and not all higher education institutions, especially the ones in rural and remote areas, are covered.

3. International situation and comparative analysis.

The One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) project is based on the achievements of other countries across the world that have transformed the way countries an access and share scholarly knowledge. Through the analysis of these global systems, India has been able to come up with a hybrid approach, according to its distinct social economic requirements.

3.1 Global Benchmarks

- **China – CNKI Model:** The *China National Knowledge Infrastructure* (CNKI) is one of the world's most comprehensive digital libraries. By integrating thousands of journals into a single, state-supported platform, China has significantly enhanced its research productivity. This centralized approach is credited with the rapid rise of Chinese universities in global rankings.
- **Europe – Plan S Model:** Launched in 2018, Plan S is a bold initiative by major European research funders. Its core principle is simple: "**No publicly funded research should be locked behind a paywall.**" It mandates that all research resulting from public grants must be published in compliant Open Access journals, drastically reducing dependency on expensive commercial publishers.
- **United States – Public Access Model:** The U.S. follows a policy where federal agencies (like the NIH and NSF) require that any research funded by taxpayer money be made publicly available within a specific timeframe. This ensures transparency and allows the general public to engage directly with scientific advancements.

Table 1: Feature Comparison of International Models

Feature	ONOS (India)	CNKI (China)	Plan S (Europe)	USA Public Access
Access Type	Subscription	Centralized	Open Access	Open Access
Coverage	National	National	International	National
Cost Model	Govt-funded	Govt-funded	Author-funded	Govt-funded
Accessibility	Equal Access	Equal Access	Free Access	Free Access
Language	Multilingual (Proposed)	Mostly Chinese	English	English
Stage	Proposed	Established	Active	Active

4. The Need and Relevance of ONOS in India

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world, yet the distribution of academic resources is highly uneven. While premier institutions like IITs and central universities have access to high-quality journals, many state universities and rural colleges lack such facilities.

4.1 Consequences of the Resource Gap

1. **Academic Inequality:** Students in less privileged institutions lack access to updated research, limiting their growth.
2. **Poor Research Quality:** Limited access leads to outdated research and reduced publication quality.
3. **Digital Divide:** The gap between resource-rich and resource-poor institutions continues to widen in remote regions.
4. **Financial Constraints:** Subscriptions to major databases like Elsevier, Springer, and Wiley are unaffordable for smaller institutions.

4.2 Socio-Economic Importance

ONOS is a step toward **social justice in education**. It enables students from rural backgrounds to access the same resources as those in elite institutions. As UNESCO (2021) highlights, knowledge inequality is a major contributor to social inequality.

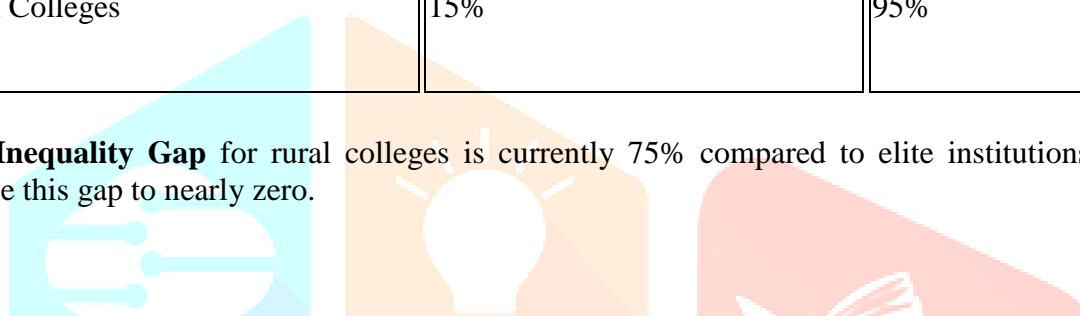
5. Data Analysis and Expected Impact

5.1 Analysis of Access Inequality

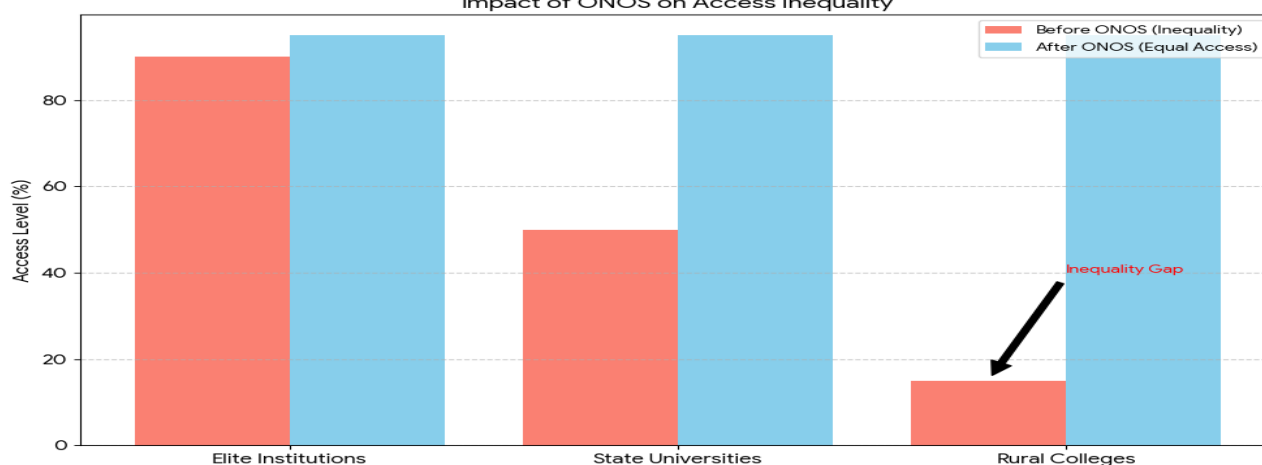
The following table illustrates the projected transformation in access levels before and after ONOS implementation:

Institution Category	Pre-ONOS Access (%)	Post-ONOS Access (%)
Elite Institutions	90%	95%
State Universities	50%	95%
Rural Colleges	15%	95%

The **Inequality Gap** for rural colleges is currently 75% compared to elite institutions; ONOS seeks to reduce this gap to nearly zero.



Impact of ONOS on Access Inequality



5.2 Distribution of Benefits

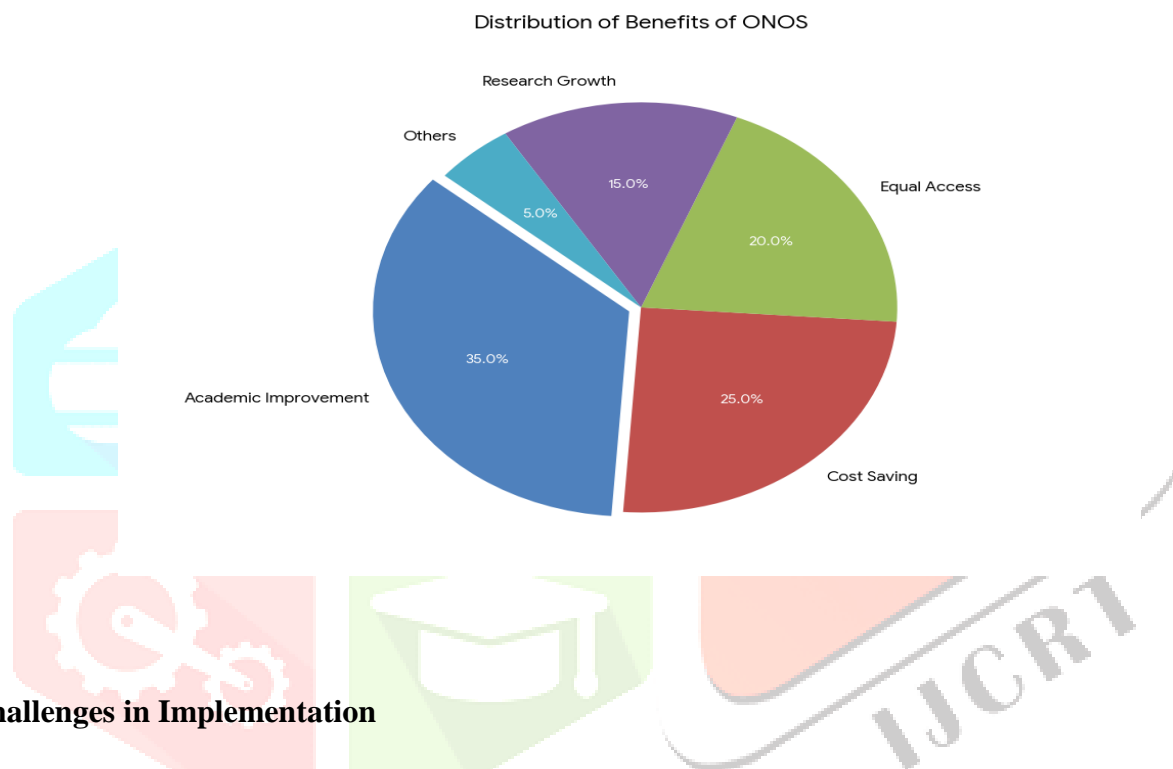
One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) project is a groundbreaking in the knowledge economy in India. The program can accomplish this by making sure the fruits of digital transformation are spread equally within the academic ecosystem by concentrating access to high-quality scholarly resources.

The benefits are divided into five pillars based on the projected impacts:

- Obviously, the first beneficiary, who is the Academic Improvement (35%): the level of learning will increase considerably. ONOS fosters evidence-based learning culture and pedagogical quality since students and faculty have easy access to journals, including those across the globe.
- Cost Saving (25%): With the restructuring of the system of institutional subscriptions into large-scale central negotiation, as contrasted with the cost-cutting, pulverizing institutions, the economy of scale

becomes colossal. This will alleviate the burden on national exchequer since no one will be having to spend money on similar items because the different universities will be spending the money.

- ☐☐Equal Access (20%): ONOS is a fair-minded even-handed person. It also bridges the so-called resource gap between large institutions (like IITs/IIMs) and small institutions (in rural parts of India) so that the intellectual good of all the Indian students is the same regardless of the location of residence or whether or not they are a product of a larger institution.
- ☐Research Growth (15%): The made available the latest scientific literature is the key to the innovation. Such a distribution is in line with the number of articles we are likely to see increasing, the rate of citation, and competitiveness of the Indian research publications across the world.
- Others (5%): This covers the second benefits are the efficiency at the administration, uniform technical infrastructure and streamlined data management to national libraries.



6. Challenges in Implementation

One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) is a game changer in the world of research and academia in India. A move towards a consolidated national framework, however, is a complicated field of financial, legislative and logistic challenges to overcome to leave the still-disjointed institutional model. In order to make the project sustainably run in the long term, a number of issues should be dealt with.

6.1 Economic Constraints and Legal Constraints.

High initial Investment: shifting to national licensing system involves a colossal initial financial investment on the part of the central government. The consistent, long-term funding to maintain these expensive subscriptions among competing cost-cutting priorities is one of the major concerns of policymakers.

Obstacles: 1) **Copyright and licensing issues:** Dealing with publishing giant in the world entails complex legal systems. Enhancing the international rights to intellectual property (IPR) with Indian education fair-use provisions is a demanding undertaking. Also, the access to the so-called perpetual access, i.e. having the government always access to the archives despite the expiration of a contract, can also be one of the most controversial issues in negotiations.

6.2 A verbal and Accessibility impediments.

□ **Language Barriers:** An overwhelming percentage of high impact international research is in English only. This poses a silo of knowledge in a country such as India whereby large numbers of students seek higher education in local language mediums. The advantages of ONOS might not make it to the grassroots level in a way without embedded AI-powered translation capabilities or summaries in local languages. Digital Infrastructure Gap ONOS offers the content but most rural and state-funded institutions continue to miss an essential conduit, that high-speed broadband and current hardware which can access and download large digital databases.

6.3 Administrative and Technical Co-ordination.

Different Institutional Ecosystem: It is a colossal administrative challenge to co-ordinate thousands of different institutions, such as top-end institutes like IITs and IISc, right down to small state-owned colleges. The possibility of having a standardized access protocol with institutions of different levels of technical maturity is a major threat to the homogeneity of implementation.

Technical Synergy and Security: the creation of a powerful, but centralized portal that can accommodate millions of simultaneous users without failure is a technical feat. A fully functional single sign-on (SSO) system, with stringent data privacy and security assurances of millions of researchers, would have to be tightly controlled at high technical level.

7. Comprehensive Policy Recommendations

In order to have a successful implementation of One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) framework, it must be implemented on a multi-dimensional approach with an equilibrium between technological innovation and administrative change. The following policy pillars are proposed to guarantee a long-term sustainability and balanced impact:

7.1 Governance and Regulatory Framework.

□ **Independent Regulatory Authority:** It should have an office at the national level which should lead in negotiation with the world publishers. This authority would provide clarity in licensing, administration of central budget, and a point of contact between the government and the academic institutions to be able to respond to grievances.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP): The involvement of EdTech companies and separate organizations would be able to offer essential technical assistance and additional financing. The experience of the private sector can help in improving the efficiency of the platform, and corporate contributions can help in the expansion of the infrastructure.

7.2 Technological Infrastructure

□ **Single-Window Platform:** It is necessary to have a single entry point. There should be institutional logins (Single Sign-On) on this platform and a powerful AI search system to process a large number of user traffic in a variety of disciplines.

□ **Strengthening Digital Backbone:** The government needs to put a significant focus on increasing high-speed internet and stable cloud-based infrastructure, with special attention to rural educational centers to guarantee that remote access to digital means is not limited to only metropolitan areas.

7.3 inclusivity and Human capital.

□ **Multilingual Integration:** The platform must be multilingual to be really inclusive; it needs to support translation tools on AI and offer medical research summaries in local languages. This removes English-language barrier among students in the regional-medium institutions.

□ Capacity Building & Training: Providing access is only the first step. The librarians, faculty, and students, particularly in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, need to be armed with continuous workshops and digital literacy programs to make the most of these high-quality resources.

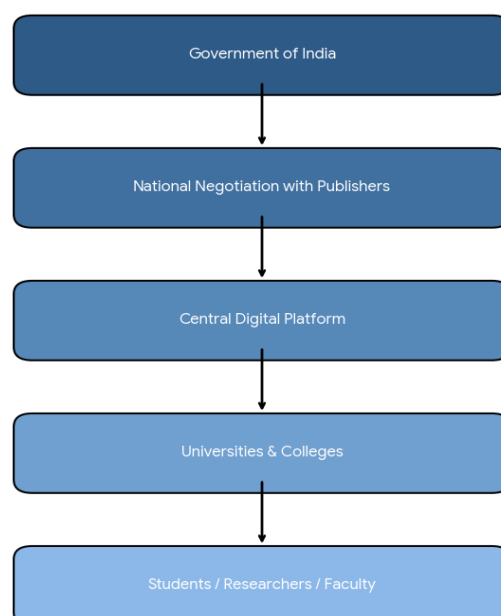
8. The ONOS Implementation Process

The execution of the **One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS)** initiative follows a strategic, top-down logical flow designed to streamline knowledge access across India. This systematic approach ensures that the transition from high-level policy to classroom-level utility is seamless and efficient.

The Implementation Lifecycle

- Policy Formulation & Funding (Government of India): The process is initiated at the top of the hierarchy, with the Ministry of Education developing the vision, and ensuring that the core funding is provided by the central government. Through centralization of the budget, funds are taken off individual state universities and colleges and this guarantees national commitment.
- □ Collective Bargaining (National Negotiation): A negotiating committee of international publishers comes up with a single budget where compelling negotiation is carried out by a national committee. Through the government acting on behalf of the whole Indian academic community as a bloc, enormous bargaining power is used to help leverage the low prices and provide the best of licensing conditions something that individual institutions would not be able to obtain.
- Duration: 1 year (Technical Deployment): A financial and technical platform of the centralized digital gateway will be created to become the single access point to all scholarly materials. This platform incorporates intricate databases into an accessible user interface, and it delivers authentication and access to millions of simultaneous users in a fast and efficient way.
- □ Institutional Onboarding (Universities & Colleges): The institutional level implementation is at ground level where thousands of various institutions are registered. This stage comprises IP address mapping, training of local administrators and even those most distant colleges are to be technically aligned to the national server.
- Knowledge Delivery (The Beneficiaries): Students, researchers, and faculty are the last and most important beneficiaries since they can access the benefits of a payfree and paywall-free system. This enables the academic fraternity to emphasise innovation and learning and not acquisition of resources.

ONOS Implementation Flowchart



9. Conclusion

One Nation, One Subscription (ONOS) policy is a promise policy of democratizing knowledge in India. Its ability to break the knowledge paywalls via a centred form of model helps to bridge the divide between the elite and rural institutions so that academic achievement is based not on finances, but on merit.

Although its effectiveness relies on a well-developed and effective digital infrastructure and its efficient implementation, ONOS represents a compelling remedy to the economic efficiency and social equity. In the end, this project develops the culture of innovation and quality research, which makes India a highly competitive, knowledge-based society in the world and a universal access to education leader.

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