DEVELOPING VIETNAMESE SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS IN A NON ENGLISH SPEAKING CONTEXT: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

DESENVOLVIMENTO DE REVISTAS CIENTÍFICAS VIETNAMITAS EM UM CONTEXTO NÃO INGLÉS: DESAFIOS ATUAIS E IMPLICAÇÕES POLÍTICAS

Tran Huu Tuyen*
*Lac Hong University, Dong Nai, Vietnam
tuyentran@lhu.edu.vn

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Abstract

Vietnam's scientific publishing landscape is expanding rapidly, yet most domestic journals remain marginal in international indexing systems and global scholarly communication. This paper develops an integrated, governance oriented analysis of Vietnamese journal development under a non English speaking context, with particular attention to how language, evaluation incentives, editorial capacity, and open science pressures interact. Building on evidence from prior studies of Vietnam's publication growth and collaboration structure, barriers faced by Vietnamese scholars—especially in the social sciences and humanities—and journal level compliance gaps for regional and global indexing, we argue that Vietnam's journal system is constrained less by "individual quality deficits" than by structural bottlenecks: fragmented governance, weak professionalization of editorial work, limited international visibility infrastructure, and policy incentives that emphasize counted outputs over ecosystem quality. To address these challenges, we adapt the "journal ecological chain" approach used in open science contexts to articulate how actors (authors, editors, publishers, funders, platforms, regulators) and value flows (knowledge, reputation, resources) co evolve. We further connect journal governance to integrity and transparency tools, including open peer review, open access development pathways, and data stewardship norms such as FAIR (Wilkinson *et al*., 2016). The paper concludes with a staged policy roadmap for Vietnam that emphasizes bilingual discoverability, editorial professionalization, sustainable open access financing, transparent integrity standards, and periodic policy revision mechanisms informed by comparative regulatory scholarship.

Resumo

O panorama editorial científico do Vietnã está se expandindo rapidamente, mas a maioria das revistas nacionais continua marginalizada nos sistemas de indexação internacionais e na comunicação acadêmica global. Este artigo desenvolve uma análise integrada e orientada para a governança do desenvolvimento das revistas vietnamitas em um contexto não anglófono, com especial atenção para a forma como a língua, os incentivos à avaliação, a capacidade editorial e as pressões da ciência aberta interagem. Com base em evidências de estudos anteriores sobre o crescimento das publicações e a estrutura de colaboração do Vietnã, as barreiras enfrentadas pelos acadêmicos vietnamitas — especialmente nas ciências sociais e humanas — e as lacunas de conformidade das revistas para indexação regional e global, argumentamos que o sistema de revistas do Vietnã é menos limitado por "déficits de qualidade individuais" do que por gargalos estruturais: governança fragmentada, profissionalização fraca do trabalho editorial, infraestrutura de visibilidade internacional limitada e incentivos políticos que enfatizam os resultados contados em detrimento da qualidade do ecossistema. Para enfrentar esses desafios, adaptamos a abordagem da "cadeia ecológica de periódicos" usada em contextos de ciência aberta para articular como os atores (autores, editores, publicadores, financiadores, plataformas, reguladores) e os fluxos de valor (conhecimento, reputação, recursos) coevoluem. Além disso, conectamos a governança dos periódicos a ferramentas de integridade e transparência, incluindo revisão por pares aberta, caminhos de desenvolvimento de acesso aberto e normas de gestão de dados, como FAIR (Wilkinson et al., 2016). O artigo conclui com um roteiro de políticas em etapas

para o Vietnã que enfatiza a descoberta bilíngue, a profissionalização editorial, o financiamento sustentável do acesso aberto, padrões de integridade transparentes e mecanismos de revisão periódica de políticas informados por estudos comparativos sobre regulamentação.

1 INTRODUCTION

Scientific journals are not merely "containers" for manuscripts; they are institutional infrastructures that coordinate credibility, visibility, and scholarly memory. Over the past two decades, Vietnam's research output has increased substantially, with Scopus-indexed publications rising and international collaboration playing a dominant role in national output patterns (Manh, 2015). At the same time, Vietnam's domestic journal ecosystem—particularly in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) and many applied fields—continues to face persistent constraints in international recognition, editorial professionalization, and sustainable business models (Long & Toan, 2015; Vuong, 2019).

A central reason is the structural asymmetry of global scholarly communication. English functions as the de facto language of international science, and researchers and journals operating outside English-dominant contexts face systematic disadvantages in discoverability, citation accumulation, and reputational transmission (Amano *et al*., 2016). This is not merely a linguistic barrier. Language mediates platform design, indexing inclusion, reviewer pools, editorial workflows, and the "cultural fit" of journals to international norms (Ding *et al*., 2023; Yoon *et al*., 2023). In Vietnam, these pressures are intensified by rapid policy-driven internationalization: universities and ministries increasingly reward publications indexed in Scopus/WoS, often treating indexing status as a proxy for research quality (Nguyen *et al*., 2021; Phan Thi *et al*., 2021). While these policies can accelerate international integration, they may also unintentionally weaken domestic journals if the incentive system channels the best manuscripts away from local venues and frames domestic publishing as second-tier.

The Vietnamese case also illustrates how evaluation regimes shape publishing behavior. The global debate on research assessment highlights that metric-driven evaluation can distort research priorities, encourage "counting" rather than quality, and amplify inequities between institutions and countries (Hicks *et al*., 2015). In contexts where promotion and funding decisions strongly depend on indexed outputs, authors and institutions rationally redirect effort toward internationally indexed journals—even if domestic journals are strategically important for national knowledge needs, local language scholarship, and practitioner communities. Vietnam's scholarly publishing thus faces a classic governance dilemma: how to strengthen domestic journals without undermining internationalization goals, and how to design incentives that reward both credible national outlets and global engagement (Vuong, 2019).

Open science adds a further layer of complexity. Globally, open access (OA) has expanded rapidly since the 1990s (Laakso *et al*., 2011), and recent evidence indicates that a substantial share of the scholarly literature is now openly accessible, with measurable differences in readership and citation patterns across OA routes (Piwowar *et al*., 2018). Open science practices also include open data, transparency in editorial processes, and experimentation with peer review models (Ross-Hellauer, 2017; Wilkinson *et al*., 2016). For journals in non-English-speaking countries, these shifts can be opportunities—reducing access barriers and improving global visibility—but also risks, including financial stress, integrity challenges, and vulnerability to predatory publishing dynamics (Shen & Björk, 2015; Shamseer *et al*., 2017).

The integrity dimension is particularly salient. Predatory journals have expanded alongside OA growth, exploiting author-pays models and information asymmetries (Shen & Björk, 2015). Empirical studies show that predatory and legitimate journals often differ in transparency, editorial practices, and peer review signals, yet those differences can be hard for authors—especially early-career researchers—to evaluate quickly (Shamseer *et al*., 2017). Vietnam's system, like many emerging research systems, is vulnerable to these risks due to high publication pressure, uneven editorial capacity, and limited institutional support for publishing literacy (Pho, 2016; Trinh *et al*., 2020).

At the journal level, evidence suggests that compliance gaps remain significant. For example, a focused assessment of Vietnamese education journals found that—even within an accredited domestic set—many outlets failed to meet minimum criteria for regional indexing and none satisfied the minimal Scopus criteria at the time of evaluation,

pointing to deficits in English-language journal homepages, metadata infrastructure, and standard publishing identifiers (Tran *et al*., 2019). These are not simply technical issues; they reflect governance capacity: the ability of journals and their host institutions to implement standards consistently, finance platform improvements, and maintain reliable editorial workflows.

This paper addresses a clear research gap: despite growing attention to Vietnam's international publishing output, there remains limited integrative research that treats Vietnamese journals as an interdependent system shaped by language, policy incentives, and open science transitions. The paper's contribution is threefold:

1. Conceptual contribution: We adapt the "journal ecological chain" perspective to Vietnam to map actors, value flows, and governance mechanisms, drawing on open science ecological analyses developed in other non-English contexts.

2. Analytical contribution: We synthesize empirical evidence on Vietnam's publishing constraints—language barriers, author-side obstacles, journal compliance gaps, and incentive pressures—to identify governance bottlenecks.

3. Policy contribution: We propose a staged roadmap emphasizing bilingual discoverability, editorial professionalization, sustainable OA financing, integrity standards, and periodic review of journal policies, informed by comparative governance scholarship emphasizing revision mechanisms and regulatory specificity.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Non-English contexts and structural visibility constraints

The global concentration of scientific prestige in English has long been recognized, but recent work clarifies that language barriers operate through multiple channels: access to international debates, ability to disseminate local findings, and capacity to participate in peer review networks (Amano *et al*., 2016). For journals, language affects far more than article text: it shapes website design, metadata language, submission systems, and international author pipelines. Evidence from analyses of Scopus-indexed journals in non-English-speaking countries suggests that bilingual

homepages and English-language discoverability features are strongly associated with broader international reach (Yoon *et al*., 2023).

In China and other large non-English systems, comparative analyses show that national strategies often involve building localized evaluation frameworks, strengthening domestic platforms, and selectively internationalizing editorial processes to avoid overdependence on external indexing regimes (Ding *et al*., 2023). This perspective is relevant for Vietnam because it frames journal development as a coordinated system problem rather than a "journal-by-journal" effort.

2.2 Open access expansion and sustainability risks

Open access has grown from a pioneering phase into a mainstream publishing route, with rapid expansion in the number of OA journals and articles over time (Laakso *et al*., 2011). Large-scale measurement of OA prevalence suggests that a significant share of the global literature is accessible through OA, with variation across disciplines and routes (Piwowar *et al*., 2018). For Vietnam, OA offers potential benefits: domestic journals can reduce paywall-based invisibility and improve readership among international and domestic audiences. However, OA also raises sustainability questions, especially when institutional budgets are limited and when APC models may be politically or socially contested.

The OA transition is also intertwined with integrity risks. Predatory publishers have exploited author-pays models, increasing article volumes in venues with weak or superficial quality control (Shen & Björk, 2015). In biomedical publishing, systematic comparisons indicate that predatory journals often display observable differences (e.g., governance transparency, editorial board legitimacy, peer review signals), yet these differences may be subtle and difficult to assess quickly under pressure (Shamseer *et al*., 2017). Emerging systems with strong "publish or perish" pressures can become disproportionately affected.

2.3 Peer review transparency and editorial capacity

Peer review remains the central credibility technology of scholarly publishing. Yet there is increasing experimentation with open peer review and related transparency

innovations. A systematic review of open peer review definitions highlights multiple dimensions—open identities, open reports, open participation—and shows that "openness" is not one practice but a configurable design space (Ross-Hellauer, 2017). For Vietnam, the key issue is feasibility: open review may improve transparency, but it also increases demands on editorial capacity, reviewer recruitment, and governance clarity about reviewer accountability.

2.4 Evaluation regimes, metrics, and unintended consequences

The global debate on research evaluation emphasizes that metrics should support expert judgment rather than replace it. The Leiden Manifesto outlines principles to avoid misuse of bibliometrics, particularly when metrics drive resource allocation and career decisions (Hicks *et al*., 2015). At the same time, alternative indicators (altmetrics) have been proposed to capture broader societal impact, but these measures also carry interpretive risks and may reflect platform-specific attention rather than validated quality (Bornmann, 2014). In systems where international publication targets are newly institutionalized, the risk is a narrow "indexing race" that promotes short-term publication counts over long-term ecosystem capacity (Vuong, 2019).

Vietnam-specific studies illustrate these tensions. Evidence indicates that Vietnamese researchers face constraints related to time, funding, language competence, and institutional support, particularly in SSH contexts (Pho, 2016). Studies of educational researchers highlight the importance of collaboration networks and research assistance support in achieving international-indexed publications (Trinh *et al*., 2020). Meanwhile, policy analyses suggest that reforms (e.g., doctoral requirements and national funding mechanisms) can stimulate international publishing but may need refinement to avoid perverse incentives and uneven impacts (Phan Thi *et al*., 2021; Nguyen *et al*., 2021).

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper conceptualizes Vietnamese journal development using a journal ecological chain lens, where journals are embedded in a network of actors and value flows (Chang *et al*., 2024). In this view:

- Actors include authors, editors, reviewers, publishers (universities, institutes, associations), ministries and funders, and digital platforms/indexes.
- Value flows include knowledge (articles, data, peer review), reputation (indexing, citations, visibility), and resources (funding, staff, infrastructure).
- Governance mechanisms include legal rules, ethics standards, editorial policies, peer review norms, and financing models.

Open science practices change interactions and expectations across this chain: OA increases readership and discoverability but creates new cost structures; open data requires stewardship standards; open peer review shifts accountability; and AI-assisted workflows challenge authorship and integrity norms (Wilkinson *et al*., 2016; Ross-Hellauer, 2017; Sun *et al*., 2025).

Figure 1

Journal ecological chain framework for Vietnam

3.1 Research Questions

RQ1. What are the dominant structural challenges faced by Vietnamese scientific journals in a non-English-speaking context?

RQ2. Which institutional, linguistic, and policy factors most strongly influence journal quality and international visibility?

RQ3. What lessons can Vietnam adapt from the development strategies of other non-English systems—particularly China—without reproducing context-mismatched solutions?

RQ4. What governance and policy roadmap is feasible for Vietnam to strengthen domestic journals while aligning with open science and integrity standards?

4 METHODOLOGY

This study uses a synthetic policy-and-literature analysis approach. Rather than presenting new primary survey data, we integrate:

1. Secondary empirical evidence from bibliometric and journal compliance studies in Vietnam and from author-experience and incentive analyses.
2. Comparative insights from non-English systems and open science governance scholarship.
3. Normative standards and governance tools relevant to integrity, transparency, and data stewardship.

The objective is to produce a policy-relevant framework that identifies bottlenecks and maps feasible interventions for Vietnam.

5 FINDINGS: GOVERNANCE BOTTLENECKS IN VIETNAMESE JOURNAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Language infrastructure and discoverability

Language shapes not only manuscripts but also the "front door" of the journal: homepages, aims and scope, editorial policies, and metadata. Studies of non-English journal systems show that bilingual or English-accessible homepages significantly enhance discoverability and help journals integrate into international indexing pipelines (Yoon *et al.*, 2023). In Vietnam, however, many journals still lack robust English-language interfaces and standardized metadata practices.

A concrete illustration appears in the assessment of Vietnamese education journals: editors were advised to establish informative English homepages and obtain electronic ISSNs to meet indexing criteria (Tran *et al*., 2019). This implies that some barriers are not inherently "academic quality" issues but infrastructural and governance problems—journals may publish meaningful work yet remain invisible due to insufficient platform and metadata standards.

The broader literature on language barriers reinforces that non-English scholarship is systematically disadvantaged in global science, including in dissemination and uptake (Amano *et al*., 2016). Therefore, Vietnam's journal strategy requires bilingual discoverability as a baseline rather than an optional "internationalization" add-on (Ding *et al*., 2023).

5.2 Editorial professionalization and peer review capacity

Vietnamese journals commonly rely on part-time editorial labor, with limited professional training and uneven access to editorial technologies. This becomes critical when journals attempt to meet international norms for peer review transparency, ethics oversight, and publication timeliness.

Open peer review illustrates both opportunity and constraint. While open peer review can improve accountability and enable reuse of review reports, it also demands governance clarity (e.g., reviewer consent, anonymity options, dispute resolution) and increased editorial workload (Ross-Hellauer, 2017). For journals with limited staff and weak reviewer databases, adopting open review prematurely could overload editorial teams. A more feasible pathway is staged transparency: publish clear peer review policies, standardize reviewer guidance, and gradually introduce optional open reports in selected sections.

5.3 Incentive regimes and the "indexing race"

Vietnam's internationalization policies have increased publication incentives, but evidence suggests that incentive design strongly shapes researcher behavior. The Leiden Manifesto emphasizes that evaluation should align with mission and context and warns against substituting metrics for judgment (Hicks *et al*., 2015). In Vietnam, strong

incentives for Scopus/WoS outputs can stimulate productivity but also produce unintended outcomes: talent diversion away from domestic journals, strategic authorship, and a narrow definition of "quality" equated with database inclusion (Vuong, 2019).

Vietnam-focused studies support this view. Research on educational scholars indicates that international-indexed publishing is heavily shaped by collaboration, support structures, and research assistance, implying that publication success reflects institutional capacity as much as individual merit (Trinh *et al*., 2020). Policy analyses also show that doctoral and funding reforms can improve international publishing but require refinement to balance development goals and equity concerns (Phan Thi *et al*., 2021). A review of Vietnam's adoption of international publishing practices similarly highlights key milestones and policy turning points, suggesting that governance design is central to publication behavior (Nguyen *et al*., 2021).

Altmetrics are sometimes proposed as complementary indicators to reduce reliance on conventional citations, but their interpretive limits must be recognized: online attention does not necessarily reflect validated scholarly contribution and can be platform-biased (Bornmann, 2014). For Vietnam, the policy implication is not to "add more metrics," but to use evaluation principles that reward ecosystem contributions such as editorial work, data sharing, and rigorous peer review—especially for domestic journals serving national knowledge needs (Hicks *et al*., 2015).

5.4 Open access opportunities and integrity risks

Open access can be a lever for visibility and equity. The long-term trend shows OA journal publishing has expanded substantially since the 1990s (Laakso *et al*., 2011), and large-scale evidence indicates that OA constitutes a sizeable fraction of the global literature, with varying impact profiles across OA routes (Piwowar *et al*., 2018). For Vietnamese journals, OA can reduce access barriers for local practitioners and international readers alike, especially when combined with bilingual metadata and improved indexing readiness.

However, OA also introduces risks if financing and integrity governance are weak. Predatory publishing growth has been documented as a market phenomenon that exploits author-pays incentives and weak oversight (Shen & Björk, 2015). Empirical comparisons in biomedical contexts show that predatory journals exhibit systematic

differences in transparency and editorial signals (Shamseer *et al.*, 2017). Vietnam's system—under intense publication pressure and uneven publishing literacy—can be exposed to such dynamics, especially when researchers face strong incentives to "publish internationally" without robust institutional guidance (Pho, 2016; Vuong, 2019).

Hence, strengthening Vietnamese journals must go together with building integrity capacity: ethics policies, transparent APC rules (if applicable), clear peer review procedures, and editorial accountability mechanisms.

5.5 Governance fragmentation and standards systems

Vietnam's journal ecosystem involves multiple ministries, professional associations, universities, and research institutes. Fragmentation can lead to inconsistent standards, uneven funding, and lack of shared infrastructure. Comparative scholarship in China emphasizes building system-level strategies under open science pressures: clarifying actor roles and redesigning value flows across the journal ecological chain (Chang *et al.*, 2024). China's experience also highlights the importance of developing comprehensive publication ethics standards and modular governance systems that journals can adopt consistently (Xie *et al.*, 2024).

For Vietnam, the governance challenge is not simply adopting international templates but building nationally coherent, locally feasible standards. Here, insights from regulatory scholarship—although developed in different policy domains—offer useful analogies. For example, research on revisional legislative processes emphasizes the need for periodic review mechanisms to maintain democratic legitimacy and sustainability in policy instruments over time (Santos, 2024). Applied to journals, this suggests that journal policies and national journal regulations should be subject to scheduled revision cycles (e.g., every 3–5 years) based on performance evidence and stakeholder consultation.

Similarly, comparative work on environmental crimes law shows that regulatory effectiveness depends on specificity, enforceability, and institutional capacity rather than general principles alone (Spadotto *et al.*, 2017). In journal governance terms, "integrity" must be operationalized through enforceable procedures: conflict-of-interest declarations, authorship contribution statements, misconduct handling workflows, and verifiable editorial decision logs. Finally, scholarship on biopiracy and traditional knowledge

stresses the importance of clear rules for rights, benefit-sharing, and protection of vulnerable knowledge holders (Gomes & Sampaio, 2019). Translated to publishing, this underscores the need for clear IP rules, data rights policies, and protections for local/community-based knowledge—especially when Vietnamese journals publish applied research involving indigenous knowledge, biodiversity, or sensitive datasets.

5.6 Emerging challenges: AI-assisted publishing workflows

AI-generated or AI-assisted content is reshaping editorial workflows globally. Evidence from journal publishing studies in China shows the emergence of policy responses to AI-generated content (AIGC), including debates on disclosure, authorship responsibility, detection limits, and workflow redesign (Sun *et al*., 2025). Even if Vietnam's journals are at an earlier stage of formal policy adoption, AIGC introduces immediate governance questions: how to define acceptable assistance (language editing vs. content generation), how to require disclosure, and how to manage integrity risks in peer review and production. Integrating AI governance early—through disclosure requirements and human oversight—is likely cheaper and more credible than retrofitting controls after reputational harm occurs (Sun *et al*., 2025; Xie *et al*., 2024).

6 DISCUSSION: WHAT CAN VIETNAM ADAPT FROM OTHER NON-ENGLISH SYSTEMS?

Vietnam's challenge resembles a pattern described in comparative studies of non-English systems: domestic journals compete not only for manuscripts but for legitimacy within evaluation regimes dominated by international indexes (Ding *et al*., 2023; Yoon *et al*., 2023). China's experience suggests that two strategies can coexist: (i) selective internationalization of top journals and (ii) national strengthening of domestic publishing infrastructure to ensure knowledge sovereignty and system resilience (Ding *et al*., 2023).

Adapting this to Vietnam implies that journal development should not be framed as an isolated editorial task. It requires coordinated action across:

- **Evaluation policy** (to reduce perverse incentives and recognize domestic journal quality improvements).

- **Editorial capacity building** (training, professional roles, reviewer networks).
- **Platform and metadata infrastructure** (bilingual homepages, identifiers, archiving, indexing compliance).
- **Open science governance** (OA financing, data stewardship, ethics standards, AI policy).

A notable insight from Vietnam-focused work is that publication outcomes depend heavily on collaboration networks and institutional supports (Trinh *et al*., 2020), and international publishing practices evolve in identifiable policy phases (Nguyen *et al*., 2021). This implies that journal policy should be designed as capacity policy: improving the conditions for credible publishing rather than merely increasing publication counts.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT ROADMAP

Figures 2 and 3, together with Tables 1 and 2, collectively illustrate that the limited performance of Vietnamese scientific journals is driven by interlocking governance bottlenecks rather than isolated technical shortcomings. As shown in Figure 2, foundational constraints related to language and discoverability, including weak bilingual metadata and incomplete identifiers, restrict international visibility and indexing eligibility. These barriers are compounded by insufficient editorial professionalization and unstable peer review processes, which reduce workflow reliability and deter high-quality submissions. At a higher systemic level, evaluation regimes that prioritize indexed outputs over domestic journal quality create a persistent outflow of strong manuscripts, reinforcing reputational disadvantages. Figure 3 translates these diagnostic insights into a phased roadmap that aligns reform sequencing with institutional capacity, beginning with baseline visibility compliance, advancing toward editorial professionalization, and culminating in coordinated national standards and infrastructure development. Table 1 operationalizes this framework by linking abstract governance dimensions to measurable indicators, enabling stakeholders to identify capacity gaps and monitor progress. Table 2 further clarifies governance responsibilities and expected outcomes across reform phases, highlighting that sustainable improvement requires coordinated action among journals, universities, funders, and regulators. Taken together, these analytical components underscore that strengthening Vietnamese journals in a non-English-speaking context necessitates a system-level governance approach that integrates language strategy,

editorial capacity, infrastructure, and incentive realignment, rather than piecemeal or short-term interventions.
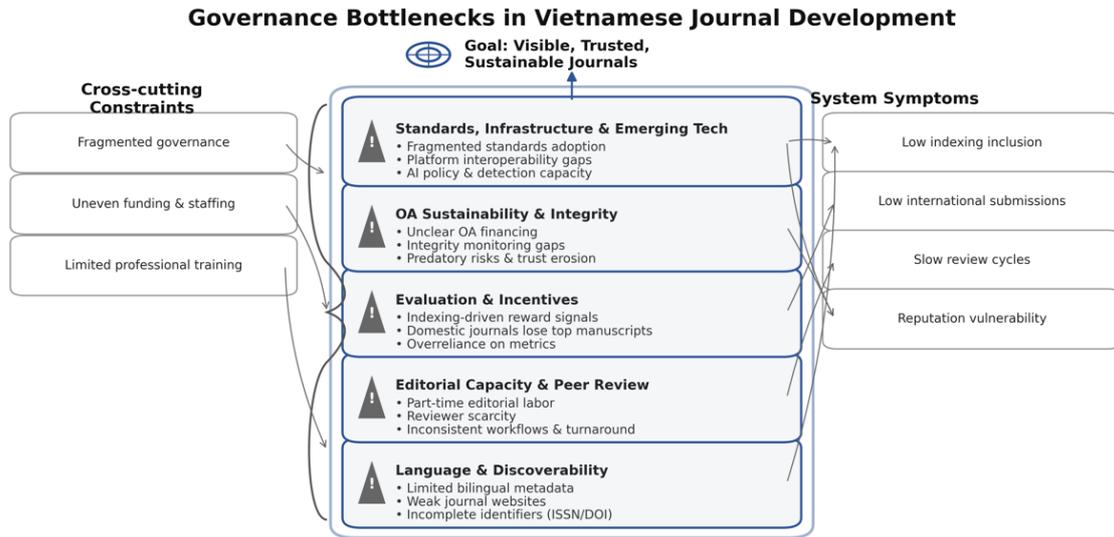
Figure 2

Governance bottlenecks map

Governance Bottlenecks in Vietnamese Journal Development

Table 1

Analytical dimensions and operational indicators

Dimension	Key indicators	Illustrative evidence/relevance
Language & discoverability	English or bilingual homepage; metadata language consistency; indexing readiness (Scopus/WoS/DOAJ)	Language barriers persist globally (Amano *et al.*, 2016); bilingual visibility is positively associated with international reach (Yoon *et al.*, 2023); gaps in English homepage design and metadata quality have been observed in Vietnamese journals (Tran *et al.*, 2019)
Editorial capacity	Professional editorial staff; size and diversity of reviewer pool; peer-review turnaround time; clarity of editorial and ethical policies	Strengthened editorial capacity is essential for journal credibility; open and transparent peer-review models increase governance and workload demands (Ross-Hellauer, 2017)
Evaluation & incentives	Use of bibliometric indicators; alignment with academic promotion criteria; institutional recognition of domestic journals	Misuse of metrics distorts research behavior (Leiden Manifesto; Hicks *et al.*, 2015); publication incentive pressures in Vietnam influence journal and author strategies (Vuong, 2019)
Open access & sustainability	OA publishing route (gold/diamond/hybrid); funding model; APC transparency; long-term digital archiving strategy	Growth and diversification of OA publishing documented globally (Laakso *et al.*, 2011); OA prevalence and citation effects empirically measured (Piwowar *et al.*, 2018)
Integrity governance	Ethics and malpractice statements; conflict-of-interest disclosure; authorship rules; procedures for handling misconduct	Risks of predatory OA publishing identified (Shen & Björk, 2015; Shamseer *et al.*, 2017); system-based standards for research integrity governance proposed (Xie *et al.*, 2024)

Dimension	Key indicators	Illustrative evidence/relevance
Open science readiness	Data sharing and availability policies; alignment with FAIR principles; links to trusted repositories	FAIR principles provide a foundational framework for data stewardship and reuse (Wilkinson *et al*., 2016)
AI governance	AIGC disclosure requirements; definition of human responsibility; detection and review workflows	Debates on AIGC risks and governance mechanisms in scholarly publishing are rapidly evolving (Sun *et al*., 2025)

Table 2

Staged roadmap for Vietnam

Time horizon	Priority actions	Responsible actors	Supporting evidence
0–12 months	Bilingual journal homepages; standard identifiers (eISSN, DOI policy); basic ethics policy templates	Journals; host universities; national publishing platforms	Compliance barriers in Vietnamese journals (Tran *et al*., 2019); benefits of bilingual visibility for international reach (Yoon *et al*., 2023)
1–3 years	Editorial professionalization programs; reviewer database development; transparent peer-review guidance; selective open-access models	Universities; academic associations; ministries and public funders	Governance demands of peer review systems (Ross-Hellauer, 2017); global open-access growth and impact evidence (Laakso *et al*., 2011; Piwowar *et al*., 2018)
3–5 years	National ethics and research integrity standards system; coordinated indexing strategy; sustainable financing for journal platforms	National regulators; research funders; journal networks	Experience with system-based ethics standards (Xie *et al*., 2024); strategic lessons from non-English-speaking countries (Ding *et al*., 2023)
Ongoing	Reform of research evaluation: recognition of editorial work and domestic journal quality; periodic policy review and update cycles	Ministries; universities; accreditation and evaluation bodies	Leiden principles on responsible research evaluation (Hicks *et al*., 2015); logic of adaptive policy revision (Santos, 2024)

Figure 3

Policy roadmap timeline

8 CONCLUSION

Vietnam's journal ecosystem is constrained by intertwined structural bottlenecks: language-mediated discoverability deficits, limited editorial professionalization, fragmented governance, and incentive regimes that prioritize indexed outputs over system capacity. Evidence on Vietnam's publication expansion and collaboration structure (Manh, 2015) shows that the country can grow rapidly in international output, yet domestic journals require different—system-level—investments. Empirical assessments indicate that many Vietnamese journals still struggle to meet minimal indexing criteria, especially regarding English-language infrastructure and standardized identifiers (Tran *et al*., 2019). At the researcher level, constraints such as limited time, funding, and institutional support remain substantial, particularly in SSH and education research contexts (Pho, 2016; Trinh *et al*., 2020).

This paper contributes by reframing Vietnamese journal development as an ecological governance problem rather than a set of isolated journal shortcomings. Drawing on open science ecological chain analyses (Chang *et al*., 2024) and comparative non-English publishing insights (Ding *et al*., 2023; Yoon *et al*., 2023), we propose that Vietnam's most effective strategy is a staged roadmap: begin with bilingual discoverability and minimal compliance infrastructure, then invest in editorial

professionalization and peer review governance, and finally consolidate national integrity standards and sustainable financing mechanisms. Evaluation reform is pivotal. International experience warns that metrics can distort behavior when used uncritically (Hicks *et al*., 2015), and Vietnam's publishing environment exhibits strong incentive pressures (Vuong, 2019). Complementary indicators such as altmetrics may help capture attention and broader impact, but they should not be treated as direct proxies for scholarly quality without careful interpretation (Bornmann, 2014). Instead, Vietnam's evaluation policies should explicitly reward ecosystem contributions: rigorous editorial work, transparent peer review practices, and open science readiness (Ross-Hellauer, 2017; Wilkinson *et al*., 2016).

Finally, integrity and emerging AI governance must be integrated early. Predatory publishing dynamics and the difficulty of distinguishing legitimate outlets from deceptive ones underscore the need for enforceable standards (Shen & Björk, 2015; Shamseer *et al*., 2017). Experiences in constructing publication ethics standards systems (Xie *et al*., 2024) and responding to AI-generated content challenges (Sun *et al*., 2025) suggest that policy clarity, disclosure rules, and human oversight are essential for maintaining credibility. Future research should extend this framework with primary data (editor surveys, policy audits, platform analytics) and evaluate pilot interventions—especially bilingual infrastructure upgrades and editorial training programs—against measurable outcomes such as indexing readiness, review timeliness, and citation/discoverability trajectories.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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