

Scopus-indexed publications: Insights into the sole Cambodian first author in the past and ASEAN journals

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Abstract

Scopus, the world's largest abstract and citation database, plays a vital role in academic research by providing access to peer-reviewed literature across multiple disciplines. This paper examines the significance of Scopus indexing, its benefits for researchers and institutions, and Cambodia's presence within the database. Despite the increasing reliance on Scopus for research evaluation, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar currently lack Scopus-indexed journals, while Malaysia leads ASEAN with 102 indexed journals. Historically, Oung Boran was the first Cambodian author to publish an article in a Scopus-indexed journal in 1967. This highlights Cambodia's early contributions to global research despite its current absence from Scopus rankings. The study underscores the need for strategic efforts to improve academic publishing in underrepresented ASEAN nations, including institutional support, research funding, and international collaboration.

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1. Introduction to the Scopus database

There are many databases available that provide information for journals, articles, and research. This paper introduces the Scopus database. Scopus is the most prominent abstract and citation database globally, covering a broad subject spectrum (Kulkarni et al., 2009). It was launched in November 2004, and Scopus is a comprehensive scientific, medical, technical, and social science database (Vieira & Gomes, 2009). Currently, Scopus provides more than 75 million items, which include almost 24,600 peer-reviewed journals, books, and conference papers, mainly in English, and it directly relates to current and future scientific pursuits and helps define new areas of academic exploration, as noted by Medias et al. (2024). Additionally, Scopus is now the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature: scientific journals, books, and conference proceedings (Meho & Yang, 2007). Besides, Schotten et al. (2017) noted that the database may be employed for literature reviews and forecasting market demand for individual journals; there are many features, but the most important one is that one can get the citation details in Scopus.

More interesting, Masi et al. (2020) noted that Scopus is home to around 5000 peer-reviewed publishers, and each year thousands of publishers apply to have their titles indexed in the

database, many of whom are rejected. Singh et al. (2021) also noted that understanding Scopus and its functionalities is essential in modern academic communication since Scopus enhances access to significant research for authors, researchers, and reviewers.

2. Benefits and implications of being indexed by Scopus

Scopus indexing has implications for authors, reviewers, readers, librarians, and ultimately institutions (Kousha et al., 2011). Being accepted for listing by Scopus can contribute directly to the citation and usage statistics of a journal, lifting metrics that are used in academic rankings (Vaccario et al., 2017). For individual articles, being published in a journal indexed by Scopus can increase the visibility of the research and ultimately the number of citations it receives (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). This is further enhanced by cross-linking all Scopus-indexed articles through its indexing of cited references, reports, and conference papers (Miguel et al., 2011). Each new reader of the journal can also potentially be a new reader of works published in the past (Moed et al., 2016). For potential authors, the gateway role of a Scopus listing offers the promise of an immediate readership and a signpost of journal quality that encourages a high volume of submissions and guarantees strong article sales for a journal (Shorley & Jubb, 2013).

Hicks (2012) noted that given that universities, funders, employers, and government bodies are increasingly relying on journal performance metrics and rankings to both allocate research funding and assess performance, the Scopus listing of a journal can have broad implications. Em and Pen (2024) also noted that this is because its calculated metrics about the quality and impact of journal articles are becoming a metrification of science in action, signifying the real-world use, relevance, impact, and availability of researcher outputs and the broader interest of the academic community. Additionally, Baas et al. (2020) further noted that referencing articles indexed by Scopus offers scholars, librarians, government, and employees an easy way to understand the nature of researchers to size up the research landscape and establish the relative importance of a journal. Finally, being indexed by Scopus not only contributes to improving the journal's reach but also has the potential to transform the journal into a competitor in the research ecosystem.

3. The first Cambodian author's article indexed by the Scopus database

Cambodia, officially known as the Kingdom of Cambodia, is a country located on Southeast Asia's mainland (Em, 2024a). Thailand borders Cambodia to the northwest, Laos to the north, and Vietnam to the east (Em, 2024b). The country also has a coastline along the Gulf of Thailand to the southwest (Em et al., 2023). As of early 2025, Cambodia has a population of approximately 17 million and covers an area of 181,035 square kilometers (km²) (Em, 2024a), and Phnom Penh is the country's capital and most populous city (Em, 2024b). Interestingly, the country has a long history dating back to the prehistoric period (Em & Khampirat, 2024; Em et al., 2023; Em, Chin, et al., 2024; Em, Mok, et al., 2024).

The first Cambodian author who co-authored an article published in 1967 by a highly reputable journal titled *Phytochemistry* was Oung Boran, using the affiliation of Faculte de Pharmacie, Phnom-Penh, Cambodia (Lebreton et al., 1967). As of January 2025, *Phytochemistry* has scored a 205 H-Index in the Scimago Journal & Country ranking, and this journal has been indexed by the Scopus database since 1961 (Scimago Journal & Country Rank, n.d.-a). It is important to note that 1967 was the year in the period of the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (People's Socialist Community) led by the Cambodian late King, namely Norodom Sihanouk, and the country was prosperous in all fields, especially education (Em, 2024b; Em & Khampirat, 2024; Em et al., 2023; Em, Chin, et al., 2024; Em, Mok, et al., 2024; Fergusson & Masson, 1997;

Keo, 2019; Neau, 2023; Sam et al., 2012; Sokhom, 2004). The article’s abstract of the first Cambodian author mentioned is taken as follows.

Five flavonoids, apigenin 7-O-β-D-glucoside, luteolin 7-O-β-D-glucoside, formononetin 7-O-β-D-glucoside, formononetin, and afrormosin have been isolated from B. australis together with the chromanocoumarin trifolirhizin. Afrormosin 7-O-β-D-glucoside was identified but not isolated. Formononetin 7-O-β-D-glucoside, afrormosin 7-O-β-D-glucoside, afrormosin and trifolirhizin are new to the genus Baptisia.

4. ASEAN’s journals are being indexed by the Scopus database

According to ASEAN (n.d.), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, through the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by its Founding Fathers: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam became a member of ASEAN on 7 January 1984, followed by Vietnam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, culminating in the current 10-member states of ASEAN.

As of early 2025, ASEAN still has ten officially recognized countries, as delineated in Table 1 below (ASEAN, 2025). Table 1 also provides estimates of the population of each country; Indonesia has the most, while Brunei Darussalam has the least, according to the IMF (n.d.). As presented in Table 1, the quantity of Scopus-indexed journals is referenced using Scimago Journal & Country Rank as of January 2025; Malaysia has 102 Scopus-indexed journals, while Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar do not have any Scopus-indexed journals, among others (Scimago Journal & Country Rank, n.d.-b). It is important to note that the number of very newly Scopus-indexed journals that are not yet ranked is not included in the table.

Table 1. Scopus-indexed journals in ASEAN countries and their population estimates

Country	Population estimate	Scopus-indexed
Brunei Darussalam	0.4 million	01
Cambodia	17 million	00
Indonesia	283 million	66
Laos PDR	7 million	00
Malaysia	35 million	102
Myanmar	54 million	00
Philippines	115 million	09
Singapore	5 million	63
Thailand	71 million	07
Vietnam	100 million	07

5. Conclusion

The Scopus database is one of the highly reputable databases, essential for global academic communication, providing academics, institutions, and publications with enhanced visibility and legitimacy. Indexation in Scopus elevates a journal's influence, augments citation metrics, and aligns research outputs with international academic norms. Notwithstanding its importance, Cambodia, in conjunction with Laos and Myanmar, presently lacks Scopus-indexed publications, underscoring difficulties in academic publishing inside these countries. Oung Boran, in the year of 1967, was the inaugural Cambodian author who co-authored and published an article in a Scopus-indexed journal, illustrating Cambodia's early involvement in international research. Currently, Malaysia dominates ASEAN with 102 Scopus-indexed journals, indicating robust research infrastructure and publication capabilities. Bridging the deficit of Scopus-indexed journals in Cambodia and other underrepresented ASEAN nations necessitates focused tactics, encompassing increased research funding, institutional backing, and partnerships with global publishing networks.

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Declaration of AI usage

The authors used QuillBot to polish the language in some parts of the article. However, they declared that the content of the article is totally theirs.

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