

## PAPER DETAILS

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## Navigating the Scholarly Arena: Examining Disparate Research Trends and Discrepancies Across Management, Economics, Sport Management, and Sports Economics Fields

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### Research Article

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### Abstract

To define the research paths in the fields of management, economics, sport management, and sports economics, this research undertook a comprehensive analysis. The research was based on profile analysis of the top five researchers in each field, with careful examination of variables including gender distribution, citation metrics, H-index, and publication volumes obtained from the Google Scholar database. Strikingly, a significant finding emerged, showing the overwhelming male predominance among the top five researchers across all studied domains. In addition, there were noticeable differences in the number of citations and H-index; management and economics had better metrics than their sports-centric counterparts, namely sport management and sports economics. This study is a significant tool for deciphering the complexities of research trends and discrepancies that exist within the management, economics, sport management, and sports economics fields. This investigation adds to the corpus of current knowledge while providing a basic comprehension necessary of these disparate but related domains.

**Keywords:** Content analysis, Research trends, Management aspects, Economics aspects, Citation index

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## INTRODUCTION

The wide-ranging effects of the sports industry on politics, mass media, economics, and health have led to the burgeoning academic field of sport management (López-Carril et al., 2019). Over the last five years, sports economics has become a distinctly developed field, and sports economists have started to work in sport management Programs (Humphreys & Maxcy, 2007). A major portion of the national economy is also occupied by the sports economy, so professionals are needed to assess how the sports economy is developing (Li, 2022). In sports management, the economic aspect of sports has been given more attention. In addition, there has been the emergence of sport economics as a recognized subfield within the economics major (Gerrard, 2003).

Sports economics research is a successful and rapidly expanding field with a growing consolidation process, despite the fact that there has been a significant increase in attention given to these fields (Santos & Garcia, 2011). At various levels of human activities, researchers have been investigating and examining various aspects of management and economics in relation to sports. Sports economics research, for instance, focuses on institutional design, property rights, and market failures; this provides opportunities for economic analysis and highlights issues that remain unresolved in the sector (Zaytseva, 2015). Therefore, the academic and professional study of sports from a variety of angles, including sport management (López-Carril et al., 2019) and sports economics (Szymanski, 2003), has gained prominence. This realization stems from the growing awareness of how sports affect a nation's economy and the necessity of researching and examining the sports industry (Junresti Daya, 2022).

Recent years have seen an increase in the academic and professional study of sports from various angles, leading to a large number of papers pertaining to various disciplines like sports management, sports economics, and sports marketing (Núñez-Pomar et al., 2019). Over the past three decades, sport management has developed into a highly visible and respectable field of study (Zhang, 2015). Despite the growth in the number and size of the sport management academics, the value of research in the field continues to be equivocal in the minds of many scholars who question its academic rigor (James, 2018). The sports industry and the economic sector are currently the focus of research due to the sports development industry; however, as the sports industry develops quickly, so does society (Yuhao & Tian, 2023).

The emphasis on cooperation and open access in scientific research has led to a notable shift in the scientific community towards open science. Because they can be used to build on earlier research by reusing data created by other researchers, research data management and sharing have become essential (Elsayed & Saleh, 2018). More than ever, a thorough understanding of statistical standards for publication in scholarly sport management journals should be prioritized (Trail & James, 2016). Because they provide the most recent findings and accomplishments and serve as the primary publication channel for many scientific disciplines, scientific journals are especially valuable to researchers (Gholampour et al., 2019).

Within the broad domain of scholarly research, Google Scholar has become an indispensable resource, offering a comprehensive overview of scholarly contributions in a variety of fields. By navigating the digital landscape of Google Scholar, we aim to unravel the trends and notable contributors within the spheres of management and economics and also sport management and sports economics research. This comparative analysis highlights the dynamic interaction between these disparate but related fields in addition to shedding light on the researchers' evolving methodologies and thematic priorities.

The most extensive source for citation counts is Google Scholar. A number of other databases, like Web of Sciences and Scopus, only include citations within their database. Accordingly, citation counts in various databases would differ (Mondal et al., 2022). The citation index feature of Google Scholar is what makes it most useful. Google Scholar is a database of articles that includes a sub-list of later published resources that cite each article. Google Scholar shows who cited a given article at a later point in time. "Papers with numerous citations are typically ranked highest in Google Scholar, and they receive an additional boost if they are referenced by highly cited articles" (Butler, 2004). In addition, Google Scholar automatically extracts, evaluates, and displays citations as distinct results—even when the cited documents are not accessible online. Thus, it evaluates a document's popularity based on how frequently it has been cited in other documents. Typically, the results are displayed with the most frequently cited references at the top (Noruzi, 2005). Some non-scholarly citations (such as student handbooks, library guides, editorials, news articles, reviews, etc.) can be found in Google Scholar. While it is arguable that citing these sources or documents will demonstrate the impact or influence of an academic, it does not reflect research impact as these documents do not necessarily publish research findings (Onyancha & Ocholla, 2009). One of the most popular metrics of scientific output, the h-index (Hirsch, 2005), has gained popularity quickly due to its purported ability to make it easy to compare researchers' scientific accomplishments (Ball, 2007). The number of articles (h) written by an author that have at least h citations is known as the h-index (Hirsch, 2005).

The ongoing advancement of science has given researchers new avenues to pursue their work, and as a result, efforts to raise the stature of science and expand its influence across a range of research domains have persisted. On the other hand, the fields of sports management and economics research focuses on market failures, property rights, and institutional design, offering opportunities for economic analysis and identifying unsolved problems in the industry (Zaytseva, 2015), contributing to the academic discourse and fostering further exploration and investigation in these areas. In this way, comparing research projects from the management and sport management and economics and sports economics groups not only enables us to assess how these fields are doing now, but it also yields insightful information. This comparison highlights the advantages and disadvantages of each group. Since each of these topics has a significant influence on scientific advancement, it can help raise the standard of study and offer better recommendations for further advancement. Many studies around the world in the field of scientometrics and research trends analysis are carried out using bibliometric techniques to analyze a specific research area or a special journal. The purpose of

this content analyze was to investigate the researcher's profiles of the management and economics vs sport management and sports economics based on the Google scholar database in the 2023-11.

## METHOD

The present study uses descriptive and quantitative content analysis to study the scientific and demographic pursuits of the top 5 researchers in each of the groups of management, economics, sport management and sports economics who have profiles on the Google Scholar platform and research interests. "Management" or "Sport Management" or "Economics" or "Sports Economics" have been used in their profile.

Google Scholar can help identify a collection of publications for a particular research topic (Zientek et al., 2018). Unlike conventional databases, this search engine automatically indexes academic web content and, as a source of data, analyzes open access (OA) levels in all countries and research fields (Martín-Martín et al., 2018). Compared to comparable interdisciplinary commercial databases such as Web of Science and Scopus, Google Scholar's coverage is much more comprehensive because it automatically parses the entire academic web instead of indexing specific sources (López-Cózar et al., 2019). Most scientists now choose it as their first choice when conducting a literature search due to its user-friendliness, wide coverage, and fast indexing speed. The present study included a complete review of the top 5 profiles based on the highest amount of citations in the four mentioned groups. In total, 20 researchers were carefully analyzed and examined. Based on the researchers' profile and their research interests, the keywords "label:management" or "label:economics" or "label:sports\_economics" or "label:sport\_management". To find researcher demographic information, three sources (Google Scholar pages, researchers' university pages, and researchers' pages in ResearchGate) and researchers' profiles in Google Scholar were used to review research-related information. Also, the criteria for checking the profile of verified accounts by the official email of the organization was, and the accounts that were not verified were not studied and were referred to the next person respectively. Finally, we reviewed and analyzed 20 profiles. A carefully designed coding sheet with complete instructions was provided to aid in data collection. The collected data were thoroughly analyzed using descriptive statistics. The key indicators that distinguish between specialized cases in the analysis units of this research are: "number of citations", "h-index", "demographic distribution", "gender distribution" and "number of published works". We reviewed the published works of researchers from 2020 to 2023-11-18.

This methodological approach guarantees the reliability and integrity of the collected data and enables a complete and accurate review of the scientific environment surrounding our research from the date in question. Finally, the data obtained from this research was analyzed using SPSS version 22 software and using descriptive statistics. Handling of citations and references was also done using EndNote20 software, and publish or perish software was also used for re-checking.

## FINDINGS

In the quantitative-descriptive evaluation by researchers in the field of management, economics, sport management and sports economics, the principles and concepts related to this topic have been examined. Using analytical and statistical methods, this research has examined several features and characteristics of researchers' profiles for detailed analysis.

**Table 1.** Gender distribution among groups

	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Management	5	100	0	0	5	100
Sport Management	5	100	0	0	5	100
Economic	5	100	0	0	5	100
Sports Economics	5	100	0	0	5	100
Total	20	100	0	0	20	100

Based on the documented findings (Table 1), it was observed that in each of the studied groups, i.e. management, sport management, economics and sports economics, all five researchers of each group were all men. Therefore, according to our research, no female researchers were observed in any of the groups. It can be concluded that male researchers make up 100% of our study population.

**Table 2.** The demographic distribution of researchers

	Management		Sport Management		Economics		Sports Economics		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
USA	3	60	3	60	4	80	1	20	11	55
Japan	0	0	0	0	1	20	0	0	1	5
Canada	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
Indonesia	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
Australia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20	1	5
Switzerland	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20	1	5
South Korea	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20	1	5
Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20	1	5
Spain	0	0	1	20	0	0	0	0	1	5
German	0	0	1	20	0	0	0	0	1	5

The findings of the actual demographic table (Table 2) gave us valuable information from our study. Based on the findings, it was observed that 60% of the management group researchers were from United States, 20% from Canada and 20% from Indonesia. In the study of the sport management group, it was observed that 60% of the researchers were United States, 20% were Spanish and 20% were from Germany. Also, the findings of the economics group showed that 80% of the researchers in this group were United States researchers and the remaining 20% were from Japan. And finally, in the study of the sports economics group, we found that 20% was related to United States, 20% was related to Australia, 20% was related to Switzerland, 20% was related to South Korea and 20% was related to Scotland. Also, the ranking order of tables 2 to 10 was based on the highest amount of citations in total.

**Table 3.** Citations and h-index of management and sport management researchers in the Google Scholar database

	Total citations (TC)	TC (Mean)	Total h-index (T h-index)	T h-index (Mean)
<b>Management</b>	956132	191226	567	113.4
<b>Sport Management</b>	70227	14045	296	55.6

Based on the findings (Table 3), it can be stated that the total number of citations of the management group was 956,132 with an average of 191,226 and the sport management group was 70,227 with an average of 14,045. Also, in the examination of the H index of the top 5 researchers of the management group, it was observed that the H index was equal to 567 with an average of 113.4, and also in the sport management group, the H index was equal to 296. Average 55.6 for the top five researchers. These detailed findings not only underscore the marked differences in citation metrics between the two groups, but also highlight the superior impact and scholarly impact of management research compared to its sport management counterpart.

**Table 4.** Citations and h-index of economics and sports economics researchers in the Google Scholar database

	Total citations (TC)	TC (Mean)	Total h-index (T h-index)	T h-index (Mean)
<b>Economics</b>	1369671	273934	582	116.4
<b>Sports Economics</b>	78323	15665	251	50.2

The findings (Table 4) showed that the total number of citations of researchers in the economics group was 1,369,671 with an average of 273,934, and in the sports economics group, the number of citations was 78,323 with an average of 15,665. Also, in the overall review, the H index of the top five researchers in the economics group was equal to 582 with an average of 116.4, and this statistic in the sports economics group for the top five researchers of that group was equal to 251 with an average of 50.2.

**Table 5.** 2020-2023 total scholars and total citations of management and sport management researchers in the Google Scholar database

	2020-2023 total scholars	2020-2023 total citations
<b>Management</b>	299	31719
<b>Sport Management</b>	218	2846

The findings (Table 5) demonstrated that from 2020 to 2023.11, the top five researchers of the management group had published a total of 299 works indexed in Google Scholar, and the total citations of these works were 31,719. Also, this statistic for the sport management group was 218 works and 2846 citations. These statistics illuminate the prolific academic contributions of both cohorts while highlighting noteworthy distinctions in the volume and impact of their respective research outputs.

**Table 6.** 2020-2023 total scholars and total citations of economics and sports economics researchers in the Google Scholar database

	2020-2023 total scholars	2020-2023 total citations
<b>Economics</b>	213	23837
<b>Sports Economics</b>	222	2892



The findings (Table 6) also showed that, like the previous table, from 2020 to 2023.11, the top five researchers of the Economics groups had 213 works with a total of 23,837 citations, and this statistic for the Sports Economics groups included 222 works with a total of 2,892 citations on the said date. Our research delineates the exponential expansion observed within these scientific domains, emphasizing the imperative for heightened investment in fundamental research endeavors. Furthermore, it underscores the pivotal role assumed by scientific output, particularly within institutions of higher education specializing in these disciplines.

## **DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION**

Undertaking research activities is an essential foundational element for the gathering and sharing of knowledge. Through rigorous research, experimentation, and critical analysis, we uncover novel insights, challenge established paradigms, and extend the boundaries of human comprehension. By following a methodical approach, we can improve our understanding as a group and exchange our findings, adding to the body of knowledge that ultimately benefits society as a whole. Using Google Scholar has additional advantages beyond its free availability. Google Scholar is easy to use and straightforward. It is also very efficient because no additional registration steps are needed and information can be found instantly (Pitsolanti et al., 2017). In this sense, having easy access to Google Scholar can encourage scholars to prioritize publication quality over quantity in order to increase their impact through citations. In addition to focusing on citation counts, authors may be encouraged to use social media to promote their work (Jensenius et al., 2018).

Based on our findings from the gender distribution table, it was observed that all the top researchers in each of the four studied groups (Management, Sport Management, Economics and Sports Economics) were exclusively male. Notably, none of the top researchers in any of these categories included any female researchers. This gender-based analysis reveals a noteworthy disparity between the genders when it comes to highly accomplished research in particular academic fields. The lack of female researchers among leading contributors in these fields raises important considerations about gender representation and inclusion in academic excellence. In order to promote diversity and guarantee a more inclusive environment in academia, it is imperative that these disparities be addressed.

The findings from the distribution table of the population of researchers reveal that the United States leads in three categories: Management, Economics, and Sport Management, with the majority of top researchers listed. Specifically, in terms of population distribution, 80% of the researchers in our study in the Economics group, 60% in the Management group, 60% in the Sport Management group, and finally, 20% in the Sports Economics group were affiliated with the United States. As a result, among the researchers in each of the four groups included in our study, 55% were recognized as top United States researchers. A comparative analysis of the two groups, Management and Sport Management, in terms of the population distribution of researchers demonstrated that in both groups, 60% of the researchers were United States, while the remaining researchers hailed from countries such as Canada, Indonesia, Spain, and



Germany. Additionally, when examining the top researchers in the Economics and Sports Economics groups, it was noted that unlike the Economics group, where 80% of the top researchers were United States, the distribution in the Sports Economics group was appropriately diversified among five different countries. In summary, the Sports Economics group differed from the other three groups in that its top researchers showed a desirable distribution and dispersion, with each of the top five researchers coming from a different nation (the United States, Australia, Switzerland, South Korea, and Scotland).

Examining the findings of two groups of management and sport management showed that the total number of citations of the top five researchers of the management group is significantly higher compared to the total number of citations of the top researchers of the Sport Management group. Based on the results, it can be inferred that approximately 93.16% of the citations are attributed to researchers in the Management group, while 6.84% of the citations are associated with researchers in the Sport Management group. Furthermore, a clear disparity in the total h-index scores of researchers in each group was observed. Specifically, 65.7% of the cumulative h-index scores were related to the Management group, while 34.3% of the scores were linked to the Sport Management group. Despite the substantial difference in the number of citations, where the Management group has more than 18 times the citations of the Sport Management group, the comparison of the h-index values indicates a less than 3 times difference between the h-index scores of researchers in the Management group and those in the Sport Management group. This intriguing finding suggests that, despite the notable variation in citation counts, the h-index values, which account for both the quantity and impact of citations, display a more modest difference between the two groups.

Furthermore, based on the findings from the analysis of citation counts and h-index scores of top researchers in the Economics and Sports Economics groups, it was identified that the total number of citations for the top five researchers in the Economics group is significantly higher compared to the total number of citations for the top researchers in the Sports Economics group. This can be elucidated by the fact that approximately 94.59% of the citations are attributed to researchers in the Economics group, while only 5.41% of the total citation count is associated with the Sports Economics group. Upon scrutinizing the cumulative h-index scores of researchers in both the Economics and Sports Economics groups, it became apparent that 69.87% of the cumulative h-index scores were related to the Economics group, while 30.13% of the scores were linked to the Sports Economics group. Similar to the previous two groups, the disparity between these two categories, Economics and Sports Economics, is again more than 18 times, signifying a considerable abundance of citations in the field of Economics. However, when comparing the h-index values of researchers in the Economics group to those in the Sports Economics group, it is noteworthy that the difference is only slightly more than two-fold. Despite the substantial difference in citation counts, the h-index values, indicative of both quantity and impact, reveal a more nuanced contrast between the two groups.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that, in terms of citation counts, both the Management and Economics groups demonstrate a notable density of citations compared to their respective counterparts, Sport Management and Sports Economics. Furthermore, these groups outperform

their counterparts by having h-index statistics that are more than two-fold higher. This consistent pattern across all four groups suggests a robust influence of the Management and Economics disciplines, not only in the quantity but also in the impact of scholarly contributions. The findings emphasize the significance of these fields and their substantial contribution to the academic discourse, warranting further exploration and investigation.

In examining the number of published articles by the top five researchers in each of the Management and Sport Management groups from 2020 to November 16-18, 2023, interesting insights have emerged. According to the statistics compiled during this period, a total of 517 scholarly works were conducted. Among these, 57.83% belonged to the Management group, while 42.17% were associated with the Sport Management group. Furthermore, in assessing the citation count of these articles within this timeframe, it was revealed that the cumulative citation counts for both groups amounted to 34,565. Notably, 91.77% of these citations were attributed to the Management group, with the remaining 8.23% attributed to the Sport Management group. A noteworthy observation stems from the substantial difference in citation counts despite a relatively modest disparity in the number of published articles between the two groups (299 scholarly works in Management versus 218 in Sport Management). This marked difference underscores the significant scholarly impact of the Management group, with citations surpassing those of the Sport Management group by over 18 times during the specified timeframe.

In examining the number of published articles by the top five researchers in each of the Economics and Sports Economics groups from 2020 to November 16-18, 2023, interesting observations have emerged. The results indicated that, collectively, 435 research papers were published during this period, with approximately 48.97% of the works associated with the Economics group and 51.03% with the Sports Economics group. Additionally, the cumulative citation counts for both groups during this timeframe reached 26,729, of which 89.18% pertained to the citations of works from the Economics group, and 10.82% were attributed to the Sports Economics group. A notable and intriguing finding is that, despite the Sports Economics group having a higher number of published works (222 papers) compared to the Economics group (213 papers), the Economics group has a significantly greater number of citations for its works. This divergence in citation counts suggests a higher impact and influence of the Economics group's scholarly contributions within the specified timeframe.

In summarizing the findings and analysis presented in the paper, we conclude that the field of management and economics boasts a higher scholarly impact and citation density compared to that of sport management and sports economics. This indicates a well-established research tradition in the former, with possibly more extensive networks and academic influences. However, this disparity points toward untapped potential within the fields of sport management and sports economics, suggesting the necessity for increased support and research development in these areas. Moreover, the analysis identifies a concerning trend of gender disparity amongst top researchers, signaling the need for more inclusive and equitable research practices to enhance diversity and broad-mindedness in academic contributions. The significance of

recognizing diverse fields of study is not merely an academic exercise but an essential factor in supporting the overall growth of the disciplines.

While the research leverages Google Scholar and provides robust insights, the paper acknowledges certain limitations, including potential biases and the problematic nature of solely relying on databases that may not offer a complete picture of the scholarly landscape. The conclusion therefore encourages an expansion of research methodologies and the exploration of additional databases and metrics to encompass a more holistic understanding of the research impact in these fields.

In light of these conclusions, the paper suggests a twofold approach for the future: firstly, advocating for the advancement of sport management and sports economics through increased research investment and absorption into academic curricula; and secondly, pushing for the breakdown of existing gender barriers and the cultivation of a more inclusive scholarly community that accurately reflects the dynamic and varied nature of today's academia. By doing so, we can ensure the continuous growth and appreciation of scholarly contributions across all fields, ultimately contributing to the intellectual wealth and societal progression.

## **LIMITATIONS and FUTURE RESEARCH**

The present research methodology hinges on the scrutiny of Google Scholar profiles, specifically focusing on the top five researchers in each group. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that this approach is not without potential limitations. Relying solely on Google Scholar profiles may yield findings that are incomplete or biased, given that not all researchers are necessarily represented on this platform. It can also be stated that these labels are only displayed as researchers' research interests in their profiles, and all their research may not be aligned with this title. Discrepancies may also emerge due to irregular updates or divergent usage patterns among those who do maintain profiles, introducing a layer of variability in the data. Moreover, the study's scope is confined to English-language keywords, specifically "management," "sport management," "economics" and "sports economics." This narrow focus may omit profiles utilizing these terms in other languages, thus introducing a linguistic bias and potentially distorting the representation of research impact within the field. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the limitations associated with the use of h-index figures. While these metrics provide quantifiable insights into the citation frequency of a researcher's work, they offer a restricted perspective on the substantive impact or quality of the research in question.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Authors' Contribution:** Study Design- Golmohammadi & Pashaie; Data Collection- Golmohammadi; Statistical Analysis- Golmohammadi & Pashaie; Manuscript Preparation- Golmohammadi & Pashaie.

**Ethical Approval:** This study complies with the Declaration of Helsinki. The acquired data has not been tampered with, and this work has not been submitted for review to any other academic publication medium.

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