Journal of Kinesiology and Wellness
A Publication of the Western Society for Kinesiology and Wellness
Volume 15, Number 1, 2026 (Advance Online Publication)
ISSN# 2323-4505

Section: Experimental & Quantitative Research • doi.org/10.56980/jkw.v15i1.189

Prestige of Kinesiology Journals Across General Research Areas Using Google Scholar Metrics

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Scholars often select journal outlets for their research based on subjective perceptions of prestige and journal metrics. Potential differences in prestige-associated journal metrics across general research areas were examined in kinesiology-related journals. A sample of 136 unique kinesiology-related journals was identified through Google Scholar Metrics (GSM) searches across 15 general research areas in 2024. The GSM 5-year Hirsch index (GSh5) was compared across research areas using a subsample of journals linked to multiple research areas. Journal prestige estimated by GSh5 and the other metrics had strong positive skew and outliers. Median GSh5 showed significant, large differences (d = 1.39) across research areas within the field. These differences across research areas were also observed in other metrics and were reinforced by moderate-to-large associations among them. The difference in median prestige from smallest to largest across research areas ranged from an unrealistic factor of 3.6 to 51. Given the substantial positive skew, outliers, differing metrics, timeframes, and databases, and large prestige differences across research areas in this study, interpreting journal prestige metrics is difficult in an interdisciplinary field like kinesiology. While it is best to avoid evaluating kinesiology research by a journal's prestige alone; judicious, evidence-based use of multiple journal prestige metrics may supplement scholars' perceptions of prestige when selecting journals.

Keywords: core, research topic, respect, subject category, top-tier

Kinesiology researchers have a wide variety of journals to publish their scholarship. This is due to the broad scope of physical activity research and the continued growth in the number and types of peer-reviewed journals (Bornmann & Mutz, 2015; Morris, 2007; Pandita & Singh, 2023). Knudson (2024) noted that increases in specialization, open-access options, repositories, and mega journals contribute to the numerous options for publishing kinesiology-related scholarship.

Traditionally, faculty authors select journals for their research based primarily on a combination of the expected scholarly prestige/reputation and the subject/topical mission of the journals (Tenopir et al., 2016). Journal prestige is the esteem or respect afforded by scholars in a discipline (Bray & Major, 2022a, 2022b; Highhouse et al., 2020). The prestige of kinesiology journals is typically documented through surveys of scholars' perceptions, focusing on subdisciplines such as biomechanics (Knudson & Chow, 2008), pedagogy (Silverman et al., 2014), physical education (Miranda & Mongeau, 1991), and sports management (Shilbury & Rentschler, 2007). Scholar perceptions of journal prestige or reputation are somewhat consistent over time (Bray & Major, 2022a; Tahai & Meyer, 1999), so legacy and Matthew Effects (Brembs, 2018; Larivière & Gingras, 2010; Teixeira da Silva, 2021) tend to create self-reinforcing positive scholar perceptions for respected journals, their articles, and subsequent citations. Authors seek this positive bias in post-publication readers' evaluation of their research in so-called "flagship" or "top-tier" journals. This prestige-centric scholarly tradition has been reinforced by a business-oriented university, grant, and journal evaluation strategy using citation metrics to rank and infer "top-tier" status to journals instead of disciplinary scholar perceptions (Rowlands, 2018; Wilsdon et al., 2015).

The authors have no professional relationships with companies or manufacturers who will benefit from the results of the present study. The results of the present study do not constitute endorsement of the products by the authors.

This study was not supported financially.

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The expansion of computer-assisted database indexing and journal metrics has influenced researchers' journal selection based on a variety of citation-based measures (Rowley et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2023). The oldest and most visible citation metric is the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) calculated for journals indexed by the Web of Science databases (Clarivate, Philadelphia, PA). Other curated databases (e.g., Cabells Academic, Scopus) market their services on the basis of greater journal coverage or indexing selectivity but report different journal metrics. More important than the diversity of journal metrics is the journal construct each metric is most closely aligned with and, therefore, could serve as a proxy measure. There has been a rapid expansion, or a "metric tide," of research metrics (Wilsdon et al., 2015) across both meta-science (bibliometrics, informetrics, and scientometrics) and many academic disciplines. Most studies from this large body of research, however, inconsistently use nomenclature for journal constructs like impact, quality, rigor, or prestige in relation to the metrics examined (Bollen et al., 2006; Egghe, 2022; Knudson, 2019; Knudson et al., 2024; Mason & Singh, 2022; Morales et al., 2021; Walters, 2017b, 2017a). Fortunately, several factor and PCA analyses consistently indicate that several common citation-based journal metrics align with one of two orthogonal journal constructs: usage/popularity (e.g., CiteScore, JIF, Source-Normalized Impact per Paper) or prestige/reputation (e.g., Eigenfactor Score, journal Hirsh index, SCImago Journal Rank) in several disciplines (Bollen et al., 2006, 2009; Franceschet, 2010; Leydesdorff, 2009; Leydesdorff et al., 2016; Perera & Wijewickrema, 2018; Prathap et al., 2016; Walters, 2017c; Yan et al., 2011; Zhou et al., 2012). Correlation studies of common journal metrics in large samples of kinesiology journals are consistent with this two-factor structure of these measures (Knudson, 2013a, 2015; Knudson et al., 2024; Waris et al., 2017).

The use of journal citation metrics as proxies for scholarly prestige of journals, however, can be problematic given the large variation in citation densities across disciplines/fields (Andersen, 2023; Leydesdorff & Bornmann, 2011; Waltman, 2016; Waltman & Eck, 2013; Zhou et al., 2012). Inconsistency in assigning disciplines/fields to journals (Jasco, 2012) and additional variation across subfields (Chacon et al., 2020) also contribute to the ambiguity in interpreting journal prestige metrics. For example, over the last 25 years, journal prestige, as measured by the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR), has been higher for sports medicine journals than for orthopedic journals (Vaishya et al., 2025). The diversity and interdisciplinary nature of a field like kinesiology are, therefore, problematic for establishing a consistent scholarly perception (Knudson & Chow, 2008) or a journal prestige metric standard for field normalization (Knudson, 2013b, 2022).

Recent studies of journal metrics for kinesiology journals have examined their consistency as proxies to this prestige construct. Knudson et al. (2024) found that SCImago Journal Rank (SJR3) and the Normalized Eigenfactor Score (NES5) were positively skewed and highly variable (CV = 81 and 171%), with Biophysical & Sports Medicine and Multi-disciplinary journals having higher values and rankings than Behavioral/Social Sciences, Education & Humanities journals. These authors and the current study use numerals in metric abbreviations to remind readers of the specified time window used in their calculation by different database services. A follow-up study of four journal prestige metrics in 334 kinesiology journals confirmed this large variability (Knudson, 2024). This study also reported differences in the top 10% of journals ranked by prestige metrics across two kinesiology-related Scopus subject categories (Sports Science; Physical Therapy, Sports Therapy & Rehabilitation) and recommended limiting the false precision and universality of journal prestige metrics in kinesiology. This diversity of research in kinesiology was confirmed by a study of 86 journals, which indicated that the Cabells Classification Index (CCI) by the Cabells database service (Cabells, Beaumont, TX) assigned articles into 10 to 18 general disciplines and 23 specific research topic areas (Knudson, 2025).

Evidence-based interpretation of journal prestige metrics in kinesiology is difficult, given the skewness, variability, lack of ratio-level measurement properties, and large differences in citation patterns across the many subdisciplines, subject categories, and research topical areas assigned to journals publishing research in the field (Knudson, 2025). Given the interdisciplinary nature of kinesiology scholarship and the diversity of physical activity expressions and populations, direct documentation of differences in journal prestige across research areas within kinesiology-related journals was needed. This study documented the magnitude of differences in journal prestige metrics for journals linked by Google Scholar to general research areas, as well as the associations among these metrics. It was hypothesized that median journal prestige, estimated by the five-year Google Scholar Hirsch index (GSh5), would differ significantly across these general research areas, supporting previous hypotheses reported for kinesiology journals based on database subject categories or research areas (Knudson, 2024; Knudson et al., 2024). A secondary objective examined whether a subsample of more diverse kinesiology journals spanning multiple research areas had higher prestige metrics.

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Method

Journal Sample

Given the substantial differences in indexing/coverage across database services, this study used the largest and most comprehensive database service [Google Scholar] (Delgado-Lopez-Cozar & Cabezas-Clavijo, 2013; Harzing & Wal, 2009; Martín-Martín et al., 2018, 2021; Tennant, 2020) to compile a sample of kinesiology-related journals. The kinesiology journals were identified using the Google Scholar Metrics (GSM) feature (https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=metrics_intro&hl=en). GSM collects citations to peer-reviewed publications and ranks journals using the 5-year journal Hirsch index (GSh5). Journals are automatically ranked annually across 8 broad subject areas and 252 more-focused subcategories.

This study used fifteen general terms or phrases representative of the broad, interdisciplinary field of kinesiology to obtain a sample of unique journals indexed, ranked, and linked to these terms by GSM. The terms and number of journals (n) included Athletic Training (8), Coaching (8), Conditioning (3), Exercise (20), Fitness (5), Human Movement (3), Human Performance (3), Kinesiology (7), Motor (8), Physical Activity (20), Physical Education (20), Physical Rehabilitation (20), Physical Training (20), Sports Medicine (20), and Sports Science (20). GSM reports only the top 20 journals ranked by GSh5 for any term search or the database-assigned subject areas or subcategories. Collecting unique journal titles and excluding three non-kinesiology journals (1 organizational coaching and 2 in physics) in GSM resulted in a sample of 136 kinesiology-related journals (Supplement: Appendix A).

A subsample of more diverse kinesiology journals was established by identifying journals GSM linked to multiple research terms. There were thirty-one unique kinesiology journals linked with multiple research area terms (Supplement: Appendix B). Journals linked to two-, three-, and four-research-area terms were identified. The study used bibliometric data and no human participant data so no IRB review was required.

Journal Prestige Metrics

In addition to the GSh5 reported for each journal from GSM for 2024, three additional journal prestige metrics were extracted based on data from the two most prestigious (Pranckutė, 2021; Zhu & Liu, 2020), curated database services [Clarivate Journal Citation Reports; Elsevier Scopus]. These metrics from Scopus data for 2024 were the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR3) and the journal H-Index (SJRhlt), as reported by the SCImago Journal & Country Rank (https://www.scimagojr.com/). The SJR is typically larger than the GSh5 because it is the Hirsch index for a journal based on its lifetime of publication, not just the most recent 5 years, as in the GSh5. The Journal Citation Reports prestige metric studied was the Normalized Eigenfactor Score (NES5) for 2024. Normalizing the EigenFactor Score adjusts the mean citations per article for discipline and self-citation. While the discipline-adjusted SJR3 and NES5 prestige metrics are conceptually attractive (mean = 1.0) for interpretation, their values can still be misleading given the strong positive skew in citations and the lack of disciplinary clarity in the calculations. The use of several journal metrics is recommended in bibliometric practice (Aksnes et al., 2019; Setti, 2013) and improves the likelihood of less-biased, more consistent approximations of difficult constructs such as prestige.

Data Analysis

Data were extracted from the database services, entered into Excel (Microsoft 365, Redmond, WA), and checked for errors. Statistical analysis was performed using JMP 18.2.2 (SAS Institute, Cary, NC) software. Given the strong positive skewness of the citation data, all data were plotted and tested for normality and skewness. Descriptive data focused on the median and interquartile range. The mean, standard deviation (SD), and coefficient of variation (CV) were also calculated and reported for the kinesiology journals to illustrate potential bias in interpreting the metrics. A Kruskal-Wallis rank-sum test was used to compare median GSh5 across all 15 kinesiology subdisciplinary research areas/subjects. The size of significant effects was examined by converting the observed test Chi-square approximation into Cohen's d (Lenhard & Lenhard, 2016). The effect of general research areas was not statistically tested for the other three prestige metrics due to the lower numbers of these metrics across many journals, the risk of alpha inflation with more tests, and the expected high associations among them (Knudson, 2024, 2025; Knudson et al., 2024). Statistical tests were not performed to compare GSh5 between journals linked to specific research areas and those linked to multiple research areas.

All scatter plots of paired prestige metrics had outliers and heteroscedasticity. All metrics paired with NES5 also exhibited nonlinearity, so Kendall's Tau (τ) was appropriate for documenting associations (Croux & Dehon, 2010). For ease of interpretation, τ was converted to Pearson r (Walker, 2003), and coefficients of determination were calculated. The experiment-wise type I error rate for this study was set at $p < .05$, with alpha inflation controlled for all seven statistical tests (one comparison

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and six associations) controlled by the progressive Holm (1979) correction.

Results

Descriptive statistics of the prestige metrics for all 136 kinesiology journals indicated non-normal distributions with very strong positive skewness ($\hat{\gamma} = 1.6$ to 2.9) and four to eleven outliers. This is well illustrated by mean normalized prestige values for SJR3 and NES5 near 1 (0.95 and 0.92, respectively), with lower median values (0.8 and 0.4, respectively) being more representative of most of the sample. The median GSh5 for the entire sample of kinesiology-related journals was 25, whereas the lifetime SJRhlt was higher (56) for slightly fewer journals ($n = 106$) indexed by Scopus. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the four prestige metrics for all kinesiology-related journals.

Median GSh5 across the fifteen general kinesiology subject terms was significantly different ($\chi^2 = 69.0$, $p = .0001$). This was a large effect ($d = 1.39$), and median prestige varied by a factor of four from the lowest to the highest research area. The lowest median prestige values, according to GSh5 (10-17), were observed in the athletic training, fitness, motor, kinesiology, human movement, and physical education journal areas. A second tier of higher GSh5 prestige (22-29) was apparent for coaching, physical rehabilitation, physical activity, and exercise journals. A third tier, with just-above-median prestige (31-35), was in human performance, sports science, conditioning, and physical training. The highest median prestige (42) was observed in the sports medicine journals. The difference in median prestige across general subject areas was also observed in the other three journal prestige metrics (Table 2). Median prestige, from lowest to highest general research area, varied by factors of 3.6 (SJR3) and 6.3 (SJRhlt), but was substantially larger (51 times) for NES5. Descriptive data from several research areas should be interpreted with caution because of the small number of journals returned by GSM for Conditioning, Human Movement, and Human Performance ($n = 3$), and Fitness ($n = 5$).

There was a significant ($p = .0001$) moderate-to-very-strong positive association among all the metrics studied (Table 3). The strongest association ($r^2 = 92\%$) was between GSh5 and NES5, even though these 90 journals are shared between different (Google Scholar & Web of Science) databases. The moderate association ($r^2 = 42\%$) between SJR3 and SJRhlt metrics was based on a larger set of 98 journals from the same Scopus database. This weaker association is noteworthy as it illustrates the influence of the time window on journal prestige metrics. The thirty-one kinesiology journals linked with multiple research area terms by GSM had a larger GSh5 (39) than the kinesiology journals (25). This difference was supported by GSh5 for the three journals linked to four research areas (Mdn = 30), four linked to three areas (Mdn = 32), and twenty-four linked to two areas (Mdn = 41).

Discussion

While previous studies have qualitatively noted differences in journal prestige across research areas and subdisciplines in kinesiology (Knudson, 2024; Knudson et al., 2024), this study was the first to formally test and quantify this hypothesis and quantify this large effect ($d = 1.39$) using GSh5. In addition, while the three other prestige metrics were not statistically tested across research areas, median values of these variables across research areas confirm similar, larger differences (4 to 51 times) from lowest to highest journal prestige estimates (Table 2). These large differences across research areas in journals were also consistent with large differences in Google Scholar Profiles citations reported for scholars across 20 kinesiology keywords used as research labels (Knudson, 2022).

The moderate-to-strong correlations among all prestige metrics also support the strong effect of research area on these metrics and provide further confirmation of these metrics' collective interpretation as proxy estimates of scholarly prestige in kinesiology journals (Knudson, 2013a, 2024; Knudson et al., 2024). The differences in association sizes are likely due to subtle variations arising from their calculation using different algorithms, databases, and timeframes.

The secondary objective of the study focused on the potential for higher prestige associated with larger, multidisciplinary journals. Bibliometric research has consistently reported higher usage and prestige metrics for larger, multidisciplinary journals compared to smaller, specialized journals (Franchignoni & Lasa, 2011; Knudson, 2013a, 2013b; Knudson et al., 2024; Rizkallah & Sin, 2010; Walters, 2017b, 2017c; West et al., 2010). This hypothesis was supported in the current study, with the GSh5 of the kinesiology journals linked to multiple research areas being 14 points higher (39) than the median for all kinesiology journals. Disaggregation into journals linked to four-, three-, and two-research also supported this hypothesis. Interestingly, the median GSh5 for journals linked to two and three research areas was closer to the whole-sample median, with journals linked to two research areas having the highest (Mdn = 41) GSh5. These data support the hypothesis that most of the difference in kinesiology journal prestige, as

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Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Prestige Metrics for 136 Kinesiology-Related Journals for 2024.*

Metric	*n*	Skew	*Mdn*	*M*	*SD*	CV (%)
GSh5	136	1.58*	25	29.3	19.9	68
SJR3	101	2.65*	0.77	0.95	0.74	78
SJRhlt	106	1.50*	56	70.2	60.1	86
NES5	93	2.94*	0.44	0.92	1.30	142

Note. *Non-normal distribution, Shapiro-Wilk W test ($p < .0001$). GSh5 = Google Scholar 5-year Hirsh index; SJR3 = SCImago Journal Rank (3-year); SJRhlt = SCImago journal Hirsh index (lifetime); NES5 = Normalized Eigenfactor Score (5-year). *Mdn* = median; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; CV = coefficient of variation.

Table 2: *Median and Interquartile Range of Prestige Metrics of Fifteen General Research Areas for Kinesiology-Related Journals for 2024.*

Research Area	GSh5	SJR3	SJRhlt	NES5
Athletic Training	10 [12, 4]	0.67 [1.11, 0.24]	80 [139, 20]	0.724 [1.397, 0.050]
Coaching	22 [25, 13]	0.77 [1.01, 0.46]	26 [38, 16]	0.221 [0.499, 0.075]
Conditioning	34 [77, 13]	1.13 [1.19, 1.08]	119 [174, 63]	1.694 [2.889, 0.499]
Exercise	29 [43, 25]	0.84 [1.35, 0.60]	50 [107, 32]	0.393 [0.958, 0.227]
Fitness	15 [31, 10]	0.50 [0.99, 0.44]	35 [79, 34]	0.491 [0.696, 0.286]
Human Movement	13 [34, 11]	0.31 [0.61, 0.29]	19 [109, 8]	0.033 [0.628, 0.032]
Human Performance	31 [51, 19]	1.20 [1.61, 0.24]	102 [167, 85]	0.943 [1.912, 0.177]
Kinesiology	17 [28, 7]	0.41 [0.74, 0.31]	26 [54, 8]	0.340 [0.578, 0.091]
Motor	15 [21, 9]	0.47 [0.58, 0.44]	54 [83, 38]	0.144 [0.367, 0.185]
Physical Activity	27 [43, 22]	0.83 [1.23, 0.47]	59 [73, 39]	0.331 [0.594, 0.148]
Physical Education	15 [26, 12]	0.74 [1.04, 0.31]	26 [59, 15]	0.181 [0.435, 0.105]
Physical Rehabilitation	24 [43, 19]	0.73 [1.10, 0.53]	66 [101, 39]	0.483 [1.092, 0.214]
Physical Training	35 [47, 29]	1.09 [1.41, 0.78]	70 [120, 46]	0.629 [1.576, 0.300]
Sports Medicine	42 [63, 33]	1.02 [1.48, 0.75]	83 [146, 52]	0.908 [3.867, 0.491]
Sports Science	32 [66, 22]	0.88 [1.31, 0.51]	50 [122, 27]	0.564 [1.717, 0.188]

Note. Values shown as *Mdn* [Q3, Q1]. See Table 1 note for metric abbreviations.

approximated by GSh5, may be related to the specific research areas published, rather than to the journal's multiple topics or disciplines.

Evidence-Based Interpretation of Journal Prestige Metrics

The strong positive skew, outliers, and variation across research areas in journal prestige metrics in this study supported previous studies noting problems in their interpretation in interdisciplinary fields such as kinesiology (Knudson, 2024; Knudson et al., 2024; Safrit & Patterson, 1986). For example, there is no logical basis to infer that the Journal Citation Reports NES5 value of the highest-ranked journal in the current study is 51 times more prestigious than that of the lowest-ranked journal. Either the purportedly rigorous inclusion criteria for journals in the Journal Citation Reports are not strict enough to confer scholarly prestige, or the algorithm used to process citations into NES5 is biased, strongly inflating the prestige of some journals.

The current data support extensive research in all meta-science disciplines that several citation-based metrics should be judiciously selected and interpreted when used at the journal level (Declaration on Research Assessment, 2013; Hicks et al., 2015; Martin, 1996; Moed, 2017; Setti, 2013). Given the extensive research in meta-science, the recommendations from recent kinesiology studies (Knudson, 2024; Knudson et al., 2024), and current results, kinesiology faculty should consider several factors when interpreting several journal prestige metrics to inform the selection of journal outlets for their research. Kinesiology scholars are encouraged to:

1. Select publication outlets primarily based on the mission/scope of the journal (Abramo et al., 2023). Scholars with expertise in a discipline, the specific theory or applications of that discipline, are the

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Table 3: *Correlation Matrix of Four Prestige Metrics for 136 Kinesiology-Related Journals.*

	SJR3	SJRhlt	NES5
GSh5	.859*	.768*	.959*
SJR3		.650*	.825*
SJRhlt			.774*

Note. *$p < .001$. Kendall's τ values converted to Pearson r (Walker, 2003). See Table 1 note for metric abbreviations.

most interested and qualified to understand and advance knowledge from a study of a specific area or topic. Inherent in this strategy is the rejection of inappropriate use of single journal metrics (e.g., Journal Impact Factor), its association with illogical evaluation of individual research reports (Knudson, 2019), and "insidious" effects on faculty evaluation, scholarship, and knowledge development (Alder et al., 2008; Brembs et al., 2013; Brembs, 2018; Hussain, 2015; MacRoberts & MacRoberts, 2018; McKiernan et al., 2019; Olive et al., 2023; Osterloh & Frey, 2020; Sperka & Phillips, 2022; Tourish & Willmott, 2015; Willmott, 2011).

2. If there are multiple journals with missions that match the study topic, or if evaluation expectations conflict with the first recommendation (requiring a certain number or percentage of publications in "top-tier" journals), seek disciplinary scholar perceptions of journals published in kinesiology (Knudson & Chow, 2008; Miranda & Mongeau, 1991; Shilbury & Rentschler, 2007; Silverman et al., 2014). Informal verification of these expectations can also be sought from senior faculty and administrators in the field. Scholars with expertise in a discipline, the specific theory or applications of that discipline, are the most interested and qualified to understand and potential knowledge advancement from a study of a specific area.

3. If disciplinary evidence or senior faculty perceptions are not available or clear, consider clarification of likely journal prestige based on careful interpretation of multiple journal citation metrics. Evidence-based interpretation involves focusing on several metrics that have been previously shown to align with either the scholarly usage or prestige construct. Appropriate citation metrics, primarily those aligned with journal prestige, can be used to confirm the selection. These metrics include GSh5, SJR3, SJRhlt, and NES5, not common journal usage/popularity metrics (e.g., CiteScore, Journal Impact Factor, Source-Normalized Impact per Paper). Extensive bibliometric evidence indicates that disciplinary citation patterns, database coverage, and metric characteristics significantly influence journal citation metric values. The current study shows that differences in research topics strongly influence journal prestige metric values in kinesiology. Metric values must be interpreted through the lens of journals with similar disciplinary and topical focus, a clear challenge for diverse, interdisciplinary fields like kinesiology. Journal metric values should not be interpreted as ratio-level measurements with the precision they are usually reported. At best, journals may be categorized into three or four levels using multiple journal prestige metrics, considering large differences across subdisciplines (Knudson, 2024; Knudson et al., 2024). Three prestige categories, accounting for minimal differences at cut points, could be described as potentially advantaged, typical, or disadvantaged in a research topic or subject area. Publication in the highest-tier journals may confer a Matthew Effect advantage to an accepted paper. This respect advantage for the outlier journals is not as much as the prestige metric values imply in kinesiology. Journals with median values of prestige metrics may expect typical, perhaps neutral to positive perceptions of published articles. This is often because the highest prestige journals reject so many submissions that many highly cited and influential articles are published in lower-tier journals. Publication in a low-tier journal, based on prestige metrics, might be disadvantaged by lower perceived prestige among some peers. This is likely not a uniform disadvantage because, ultimately, it is the subsequent citation and usage of the research that confers recognition to the authors for their contribution to the field. Scholars should avoid publishing in fake/predatory journals, which often advertise alternative and false journal metrics.

Examples

Suppose a scholar has a research study on an applied topic that does not align with a specific, specialized journal. This scholar is also interested in the likely prestige associated with successful submission and publication in a relatively new journal in the field, but there is no published evidence of faculty perceptions of prestige. This scholar might consider respected peers' perceptions

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of the journal, supplemented by several prestige metrics. Selecting GSh5 would be logical, given that Google Scholar has the most extensive coverage of peer-reviewed publications across all disciplines, and its 5-year window might be available for a new journal. GSh5 would also be less biased than the SJRhlt, which can be substantially higher for legacy journals with longer publication histories. In addition, using SJR3 might provide a complementary estimate of prestige that is somewhat adjusted for similar disciplines/fields identified by the largest curated database (Scopus). Great care must be taken in interpreting values given differences across databases and research areas. If the scholar were an athletic trainer, they might not use the GSh5 from this study because the relative prestige of this research area in GSM is biased low compared with the similar and quite high sports medicine area. GSh5 is based on more, newer athletic training journals with lower values. The prestige of athletic training journals, according to the other three prestige metrics (Table 2), is based on fewer journals with higher prestige metric values, closer to sports medicine.

Another junior faculty member working for the kinesiology unit in a highly ranked research institution might be required by upper administration to publish a certain amount of their research in so-called "top-tier" journals. This scholar should primarily rely on perceptions from disciplinary faculty, as published in articles or by senior faculty in their unit. Seeking confirmatory evidence for this recommendation or other evidence for another journal, more aligned with the study topic, could use several journal prestige metrics. The three logical choices for this situation would be from the most prestigious database services (Scopus & Journal Citation Reports): NES5, SJR3, and SJRhlt. Here, the faculty member would also need to be careful when selecting comparative norms and interpreting these values, particularly if their work is in a research area or subject category with lower prestige metrics (e.g., behavioral sciences/humanities, coaching, education, fitness). Scholars from disadvantaged subdisciplines like these may need to focus on GSh5 in the context of values from journals from similar disciplines and research topics.

Limitations

There were several limitations of the current study that should be considered in interpreting the results. The kinesiology-related journal sample focused on the highest-ranked journals based on the prestige metric GSh5 across 15 general research areas by GSM; therefore, the GSM web-crawling program may miss some journals with an open web presence or articles that are not subsequently cited in journals online. This starting point metric should not be interpreted as an endorsement of single-metric journal prestige judgments (Martin, 1996; Setti, 2013). While the 15 general research areas cover the primary range of kinesiology research topics, the field is so diverse that prestigious journals sometimes publish kinesiology research not identified by GSM. The opacity of GSM inclusion, search logic, and the limited reporting (up to the top 20 journals) also limit the study results. There is extensive research, however, that shows the superiority of Google Scholar coverage, so GSM prestige rankings and the other three prestige metrics in this study are likely to provide an accurate picture of differences in journal prestige across research areas within kinesiology. Prestige metrics also represent snapshots in time, depending on the time window and the database service. This study presents the most recent (2024) prestige estimates, which can be compared with previous studies from calendar years 2020 (Knudson et al., 2024) and 2022 (Knudson, 2024), and may be confirmed by future studies.

Conclusion

This study identified substantial differences in prestige metrics across general research-area terms associated with kinesiology-related journals. This confirmed extensive meta-science research and similar studies of kinesiology journals reporting large differences across using disciplines or subject categories. Given the substantial positive skew, outliers, differing metrics, databases used, and differences across subjects/research areas, interpreting journal prestige metrics is difficult in an interdisciplinary field like kinesiology. While it is best to avoid evaluating kinesiology research by the journal that published it (e.g., Knudson, 2019, 2024; Knudson et al., 2024), judicious, evidence-based use of multiple journal prestige metrics may supplement published scholars' perceptions of prestige for journal selection.

License

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Appendix A

Highest Ranked Journals (n = 136) Linked with Fifteen Kinesiology-Related General Research Areas

ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal; ACTIVE: Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science; Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly; Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance; American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation; American Journal of Sports Medicine; Annals of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine; Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation; Arthroscopy, Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation; Asian Journal of Kinesiology; Asian Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology; Athletic Training & Sports Health Care; Athletic Training Education Journal; BMC Sports Science, Medicine and Rehabilitation; BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine; Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy; Brazilian Journal of Motor Behavior; British Journal of Sports Medicine; Bulletin of Faculty of Physical Therapy; Cardiopulmonary Physical Therapy Journal; Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine; Clinical Practice in Athletic Training; Clinics in Sports Medicine; Current Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Reports; Current Sports Medicine Reports; Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education; Edu Sportivo: Indonesian Journal of Physical Education; European Journal of Human Movement; European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine; European Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science; European Journal of Sport Science; European Physical Education Review; European Review of Aging and Physical Activity; Exercise and Sport Sciences Reviews; Facta Universitatis Series: Physical Education and Sport; German Journal of Exercise and Sport Research; Health & Fitness Journal of Canada; Human Movement Science; Indonesian Journal for Physical Education and Sport; International Journal of Applied Exercise Physiology; International Journal of Athletic Therapy and Training; International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity; International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring; International Journal of Exercise Science; International Journal of Kinesiology and Sports Science; International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education; International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology; International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism; International Journal of Sports Medicine; International Journal of Sports Physical Therapy; International Journal of Sports Physiology and Performance; International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching; International Journal of Strength and Conditioning; International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology; International Sport Coaching Journal; ITF Coaching & Sport Science Review; Journal Coaching Education Sports; Journal of Aging and Physical Activity; Journal of Athletic Training; Journal of Electromyography and Kinesiology; Journal of Exercise Rehabilitation; Journal of Exercise Science & Fitness; Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance; Journal of Functional Morphology and Kinesiology; Journal of Geriatric Physical Therapy; Journal of Human Sport & Exercise; Journal of Kinesiology and Exercise Sciences; Journal of Neurologic Physical Therapy; Journal of Motor Behavior; Journal of Motor and Behavioral Sciences; Journal of Motor Learning and Development; Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy; Journal of Physical Activity and Health; Journal of Physical Education; Journal of Physical Education & Sport; Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance; Journal of Physical Fitness and Sports Medicine; Journal of Physical and Outdoor Education; Journal of Physical Therapy Education; Journal of Physical Therapy Science; Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport; Journal of Science in Sport and Exercise; Journal of SPORT; Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology; Journal of Sport and Health Science; Journal of Sports Medicine and Allied Health Science; Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness; Journal of Sports Science & Medicine; Journal of Sports Sciences; Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research; Journal of Teaching in Physical Education; Kinesiology; Kinesiology Review; Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science; Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise; Mental Health and Physical Activity; Montenegrin Journal of Sports Science & Medicine; Motor Behavior; Motor Control; Musamus Journal of Physical Education and Sport; Nigde University Journal of Physical Education & Sport Science; Orthopaedic Journal of Sports Medicine; Pediatric Exercise Science; Pediatric Physical Therapy; Perceptual and Motor Skills; Physical Activity Journal (PAJU); Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy; Physical Education of Students; Physical Education Theory and Methodology; Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America; Physical & Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics; Physical Therapy; Physical Therapy in Sport; Physical Therapy Research; Physical Therapy Reviews; Physical Treatments: Specific Physical Therapy Journal; Physician and Sportsmedicine; Psychology of Sport and Exercise; Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health; Research in Sports Medicine; Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport; Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports; Science & Sports; Somatosensory & Motor Research; SPORMETERE: Journal of Physical Education & Sport Sciences; Sport Science and Health; Sport Sciences for Health; Sport Training Magazine; Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology; Sportis-Scientific Technical Journal of School Sport Physical Education And Psychomotricity; Sports Coaching Review; Sports Medicine; Sports Medicine and Health Science; Sports Medicine-Open; Strength & Conditioning Journal; Turkish Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation.

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Appendix B

Subsample (n = 31) of Highest-Ranking Journals Linked with Multiple Kinesiology-Related General Research Areas

Journal	***N* of Linked Areas**
BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine	3
European Physical Education Review	2
European Review of Aging and Physical Activity	2
Exercise and Sport Sciences Reviews	3
International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity	2
International Journal of Exercise Science	3
International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology	2
International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism	2
International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching	2
International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology	2
Journal of Athletic Training	2
Journal of Exercise Science & Fitness	3
Journal of Physical Activity and Health	2
Journal of Physical Education & Sport	2
Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance	2
Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport	2
Journal of Science in Sport and Exercise	2
Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology	2
Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness	4
Journal of Sports Science & Medicine	2
Journal of Teaching in Physical Education	2
Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science	4
Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise	4
Mental Health and Physical Activity	2
Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy	2
Psychology of Sport and Exercise	2
Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health	2
Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport	2
Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports	2
Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology	2
Sports Medicine and Health Science	2