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Editorial

Metrics of Ghana-Based Journals in Scopus and SCImago: An Overview

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Abstract

Ghana-based peer-reviewed journals are gaining global recognition as outlets for scientific and scholarly outputs. This paper provides a brief overview of eight journals indexed in Scopus, using data from the SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJR) as of March 2024. In my analysis, I focused on quartile rankings, publication output, gender participation, and citation metrics. Overall publication output is low, with most titles producing fewer than sixty citable papers in three years. Specifically, only the Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education has a Q2 ranking, while the Ghana Medical Journal has the highest impact, with an H-index of 33 and an SJR of 0.260 (Q3). Apart from these two journals, all the other journals are rated Q4. Citation activity is uneven, with average citations per document below one, suggesting limited research visibility. Female authorship ranges from roughly one-quarter to nearly half of contributors, with the highest rate in the Ghana Dental Journal. The editorial suggests that, amidst the existing challenges in low-resource settings in Africa, Ghana's scholarly publishing has growth and impact potential. Recommendations include improving editorial standards, fostering international collaboration, and strengthening institutional support for publishing infrastructure.

Keywords: Citations, Gender Participation, Ghana, Research Visibility, Scholarly Publishing, SCImago Journal & Country Rank, Scopus, Journal Impact.

1. Introduction

In this editorial, I focused on international journals indexed in Scopus®, one of the most widely accepted journal databases, known for its high publishing standards and rigorous evaluation system. Over the years, most journals have strived to meet the quality standards required for Scopus indexing (Thelwall, Sud, 2022).

The impact of a country's research ecosystem is often reflected not only in the quantity of studies it produces but also in the quality of the journals based in it. Journals that are indexed in internationally respected databases such as Scopus [Elsevier®] are seen to have met very rigorous

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publishing standards. Based on Scopus data, other indexes like the SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJR) provide metric-based ranking of the journals based on several key indicators (SCImago, 2025). These indicators include quartile rankings, publication output, gender participation, and citation metrics. International journals in Africa face a range of challenges and opportunities (Sarfo, 2019; Sarfo, 2024). In low-resource settings like Ghana, journals face various challenges that often affect their impact (Sarfo, 2019).

In March 2025, the SJR database listed eight international journals based in Ghana since 2024. The purpose of this editorial is to analyse the quality and quantity of indicators of these few journals that have made it to Scopus. In this brief analysis, I offered reflections on the metrics achieved and the distance still to be covered. This editorial serves as both an analytical assessment and a personal reflection on the current state of Ghana-based scholarly publishing, highlighting its accomplishments, limitations, and the necessary changes I believe are essential to elevate Ghana-based journals to the international stage.

2. Methods

For this review, I drew directly on the SJR March 2025 metrics from Scopus, as an Editor-in-Chief of one of the eight Ghana-based journals currently indexed in Scopus. These journals cover fields from medicine and dentistry to ecology, applied research, and education. I focused on the following key indicators: SJR ranking and quartile, H-index, citation counts over three years, number of citable documents, average citations per document, references per document for 2024, and the percentage of female authors contributing during the same year.

3. Metrics and Reflections

From my assessment based on the SJR data (see Table 1) and work experience with editors, reviewers, and researchers based in low-resource settings, this editorial provides a balanced perspective of what the data is saying, the practical challenges such journals face, including financial strain, minimal institutional and national support, and weaknesses in dealing with emerging publishing challenges.

Table 1. Ghana-based journals in SCImago (March 2025)

Title	SJR (Quartile)	H-index	Total Docs (2024)	Total Docs (3 yrs)	Total Refs (2024)	Citations (3 yrs)	Citable Docs (3 yrs)	Citations/Doc (2 yrs)	Ref/Doc (2024)	% Female (2024)
Ghana Medical Journal	0.260 (Q3)	33	40	168	1119	119	160	0.62	27.98	38.31
West African Journal of Applied Ecology	0.177 (Q4)	18	13	43	708	28	43	0.66	54.46	25.64
Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education	0.173 (Q2)	3	37	41	1264	27	39	0.36	34.16	42.86
Health Sciences Investigations Journal	0.128 (Q4)	3	62	69	1958	9	59	0.08	31.58	35.91
Postgraduate Medical Journal of Ghana	0.126 (Q4)	2	21	69	432	10	60	0.13	20.57	30.00
African Journal of Applied Research	0.124 (Q4)	3	65	100	2472	39	100	0.43	38.03	29.91
Journal of the Ghana Science Association	0.107 (Q4)	3	20	39	788	4	39	0.05	39.40	24.00
Ghana Dental Journal	0.103 (Q4)	1	11	26	245	2	24	0.10	22.27	45.16

Among the significant findings are as follows:

3.1. A small number of Scopus-indexed journals

Compared to other West African countries, such as Nigeria, which has 28 Scopus journals, seeing only eight Ghana-based journals indexed gives me a double perspective as Editor-in-Chief. From one angle, I am glad that some Ghana-based journals have overcome tremendous barriers to gain global recognition. From another angle, eight is a very modest figure for a country with Ghana's vibrant research base, where local universities are doing exceptionally well in research, according to the Scopus database. From my personal observation, many promising journals are still operating outside indexing databases, often due to publication irregularities, resource limitations, or a lack of technical expertise to meet the extremely rigorous indexing standards of platforms such as Scopus.

3.2. Modest impact scores and quartile (Q) spread

Among the eight journals, only the Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education broke into Q2. The Ghana Medical Journal continues to lead the impact table with an SJR of 0.260 (Q3) and an H-index of 33. Aside from these two journals, the remaining journals remain in Q4, with none yet occupying Q1. This distribution demands urgent attention to the question of impact rather than treating them as mere metrics. This urgency is needed as journals can only climb in rank if their research output is widely cited, accessible, and trusted by the global community.

3.3. Low publication output

One recurring challenge I observed among these Ghana-based journals is their low publication output. Several journals published fewer than 60 papers over three years, a pattern that restricts growth in readership and citation. In an earlier editorial, I observed that maintaining a regular issue schedule throughout the year for most of these journals often poses challenges, including the unavailability of reviewers, fewer high-quality papers, and limited funding (Sarfo, 2019). Without steady national and institutional support, it becomes difficult to build high-impact journals in such contexts.

3.4. Uneven citation performance

In addition to the issues raised, the gaps in the citation data were striking. For instance, the West African Journal of Applied Ecology performs relatively well, with 0.66 citations per document. Nevertheless, the Journal of the Ghana Science Association sits at just 0.05. Such disparities suggest that some journals reach broader international audiences better, while others remain confined to a limited readership. In my experience, this often has more to do with what happens after papers are published, in terms of their sharing and discoverability and goes beyond just research quality alone.


3.5. Gender participation and authorship

Gender balance in research publishing has long been an essential issue for inclusiveness and equity. Across the eight journals, female authorship ranged between 24 % and 45 %. The Ghana Dental Journal recorded the highest proportion of women contributors, with nearly half the representation. Although encouraging, the variation across fields shows that structural barriers, such as mentorship gaps, funding inequities, and family-care constraints, continue to influence who writes and gets published (Hengel, 2022; Schucan Bird, 2011).

4. Conclusion

This editorial is a brief analysis of SJR data, and it offers a sense of cautious optimism to all stakeholders in publishing scholarly journals in Ghana. It shows that, although there are only a few Ghana-based journals in Scopus, their inclusion in the database is a milestone worth celebrating. Their modest SJR scores, low citation rates, and small publication volumes highlight the need for journal publishers, with stakeholder support, to address structural challenges. Based on my objective findings and personal reflections as an Editor-in-Chief, journals in Ghana should strengthen their editorial systems and culture of high-quality publishing, and invest in their editors, reviewers, and authors.

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