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Not peer-reviewed version

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Posted Date: 18 November 2025

doi: 10.20944/preprints202511.1338.v1

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Article

Mapping the Citation Landscape of Libyan Journals: A Google Scholar-Based Evaluation

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Abstract

This study examines the digital transformation of academic publishing in Libya, highlighting its role in enhancing scholarly visibility, accessibility, and impact. Drawing on data from the Directory of Online Libyan Journals (DOLJ) and Google Scholar Metrics (2025), the research assesses the bibliometric performance of 124 Libyan journals, identifying disparities in citation impact and indexing coverage. While a few journals demonstrate strong international reach, such as the Open Veterinary Journal, most remain underrepresented in global databases like Scopus and Web of Science. The analysis reveals that medical and applied sciences dominate the publishing landscape, with universities serving as primary contributors. Despite challenges in global integration, the emergence of national registries, open-access policies, and digital archiving signals a strategic shift toward quality assurance and institutional prestige. The study advocates for coordinated national efforts to elevate Libyan journals through editorial capacity-building, policy reform, and enhanced digital infrastructure.

Keywords.: bibliometrics; Libyan journals; Google Scholar; DOLJ; research visibility; open access; Africa

Introduction

The digital transformation of academic publishing has significantly reshaped the visibility, accessibility, and impact of scholarly communication across the African continent. As academic institutions increasingly transition their journals to online platforms, longstanding barriers related to geography, infrastructure, and limited distribution are being dismantled. This shift enables broader dissemination of research outputs and fosters more active participation in global academic discourse [1,2]. In the Libyan context, the move toward digital publishing is not merely technological but also strategic, aligning with national initiatives aimed at enhancing research quality and institutional prestige.

Online availability has become a fundamental criterion for journal relevance. Ankrah and Atuase have demonstrated that the digitization of African journals substantially improves their discoverability and citation potential, thereby facilitating the integration of regional scholarship into international literature [1]. Similarly, Smart P has emphasized that the online presence of African research papers contributes to increased usage and citation, promoting scholarly engagement across borders [2]. These trends are exemplified by the expansion of platforms such as African Journals Online (AJOL) and African Journals, Universities and Research (AFJUR), which collectively host thousands of journals and provide visibility metrics, indexing information, and editorial transparency [3,4].

Despite these regional advancements, Libyan academic journals remain largely underrepresented in major global indexing databases such as Web of Science and Scopus. Tella et al.

reveal that journals labeled as “African” in these databases are frequently published outside the continent, while locally produced titles are often excluded [5]. This marginalization restricts the international visibility of Libyan research and poses challenges for authors seeking academic recognition, collaboration, and funding opportunities. In response, Libyan academic authorities have established the Directory of Online Libyan Journals (DOLJ), a national registry designed to catalog, standardize, and promote Libyan scholarly journals. The DOLJ has since become a cornerstone of national academic policy, with many institutions recognizing only those journals listed in the directory for purposes of promotion, accreditation, and research evaluation [6].

The emergence of Google Scholar metrics as a widely adopted tool for assessing journal impact offers a pragmatic alternative to traditional indexing systems. Its h-index, calculated over a five-year citation window, provides a measure of both productivity and scholarly influence, regardless of a journal’s inclusion in commercial databases. Bibliometric studies underscore the growing utility of Google Scholar in evaluating African journals, particularly those excluded from mainstream indexing services [7].

Within this evolving landscape, the present study aims to assess the performance of Libyan academic journals listed in the DOLJ. Specifically, it seeks to identify active and inactive titles and compare their h-index values to evaluate scholarly visibility and impact. In doing so, the study contributes to national efforts to enhance the quality and recognition of Libyan research and offers evidence-based insights to inform editorial development and policy refinement.

Methods

The list of 124 Libyan academic journals was obtained from the DOLJ [6], the official national database managed by Libyan academic authorities. Journal titles were cross-referenced with Google Scholar Metrics (2025) to extract H-index, i10-index, and citation counts.

The collected data were analyzed to evaluate the research performance of Libyan journals in 2025, identify active titles with measurable scholarly impact, and assess improvements or declines in academic visibility and citation performance compared with previous years.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents a selection of Libyan academic journals with their corresponding H-index, i10-index, and citation counts based on Google Scholar data. The bibliometric assessment reveals a wide disparity in research visibility, citation frequency, and academic maturity among Libyan journals. The range of H-index (6–40) and i10-index (5–317) reflects distinct developmental stages, from internationally recognized titles such as the Open Veterinary Journal (OVJ) to emerging regional publications with limited reach. These findings align with prior global studies published in high-impact journals indexed by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), which demonstrate that journals with international indexing (e.g., Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science) exhibit higher citation performance and academic credibility due to rigorous peer review and standardized editorial practices [8]. The strong bibliometric performance of OVJ (H = 40; i10 = 317) is directly linked to its inclusion in PubMed Central, compliance with ICMJE recommendations, and adherence to open-access policies consistent with the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI), factors proven to significantly enhance citation visibility and scholarly influence [9].

In contrast, mid-tier journals such as the Al-Qalam Journal of Medical and Applied Sciences and the African Journal of Advanced Pure and Applied Sciences demonstrate moderate bibliometric impact. According to a meta-analysis published in *Scientometrics* (2020), regional journals often face barriers including irregular publication schedules, limited international collaboration, and weak indexing coverage, constraints that hinder their global visibility despite strong scientific potential [10]. Nevertheless, the steady citation activity of these journals provides a solid foundation for growth through improvements in editorial quality, digital archiving, and diversification of contributing authors.

Emerging journals such as the Libyan Journal of Agricultural Sciences and the Mediterranean Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences represent a positive trend toward disciplinary specialization. Evidence from NLM-indexed literature confirms that specialized journals can achieve competitive citation performance when adopting digital object identifiers (DOIs), standardized metadata systems (e.g., Crossref, ORCID integration), and transparent peer-review mechanisms [11]. Similarly, journals including the Sebha University Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences and the Wadi Al-Shatti University Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences maintain stable yet localized academic influence, emphasizing the critical role of institutional support, research infrastructure, and national funding, all key determinants of journal development in lower-middle-income countries [12].

Table 1. Libyan journals with an h-index and i10-index of more than 5.

Journal Name	H-index	i10-index	citation
Open Veterinary Journal	40	317	10,274
Journal of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases	23	71	2,648
Journal of Solar Energy and Sustainable Development	18	31	1,048
Al-Qalam Journal of Medical and Applied Sciences	12	14	1023
African Journal of Advanced Pure and Applied Sciences	11	13	555
Sebha University Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences	10	10	443
Wadi Al-Shatti University Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences	10	10	351
Libyan Journal of Agricultural Sciences	9	8	444
Mediterranean Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences	8	5	422
Libyan Journal of Science and Technology	7	5	209
International Journal of Engineering and Information Technology	7	6	266

Data generated based on Google Scholar, 03 Nov 2025.

Table 2 exhibits the distribution of journals across academic fields, with Medical and Health Sciences leading at 32(25.8%) journals, followed by 28(22.6%) journals in Applied Sciences and Engineering. This dominance reflects a global trend in scholarly publishing, where biomedical and applied disciplines consistently attract higher visibility and funding. Tennant et al. (2016) emphasized that open access in medical research significantly enhances societal impact and citation performance [13]. Moreover, Björk and Solomon (2015) noted the rapid expansion of engineering journals in developing regions as part of broader infrastructure and industrial modernization efforts [14]. Meanwhile, only 16.9% (n=21) of listed journals were in Social Sciences and Humanities, maintaining a critical role in shaping cultural and policy discourse. Although less dominant, their presence reflects an appreciation for interdisciplinary inquiry and the human dimensions of development. This is consistent with the observations of Larivière et al. (2015), who found that humanities journals, while fewer in number, contribute significantly to national identity and educational reform [15].

Pure and Basic Sciences account for 16(12.9%) journals, suggesting a modest focus on foundational research, whereas Economics, Business, and Law are the least represented, with only 9(7.3%) journals. The underrepresentation of such disciplines may reflect a strategic preference for translational outcomes, as highlighted by Powell and Peterson (2017), who reported declining investment in theoretical disciplines in favor of applied research with immediate societal relevance [16]. Furthermore, multidisciplinary journals, comprising 18(14.5%) titles, signal an encouraging trend toward integrative research, as discussed by Wagner et al. (2011) in their analysis of cross-disciplinary publishing dynamics [17].

Table 2. Subject Field Distribution of Libyan Journals.

Subject Field	Number of Journals	Percentage (%)
Medical & Health Sciences	32	25.8%
Applied Sciences & Engineering	28	22.6%
Social Sciences & Humanities	21	16.9%
Pure & Basic Sciences	16	12.9%
Economics, Business & Law	9	7.3%
Multidisciplinary	18	14.5%

The data in Table 3 reflects a strong academic presence, with academies and universities contributing 85(68.5%) of the total titles, followed by associations and syndicates at 15(12.1%), and colleges and institutes at 14(11.4%). This pattern is consistent with findings in the literature that highlight the dominant role of universities in academic dissemination and institutional collaboration. For instance, a study published in PubMed on evidence-based research practices emphasizes that universities are often the originators and custodians of systematic inquiry, shaping the direction of scholarly output through structured methodologies and institutional support. Moreover, the involvement of associations and syndicates reflects the growing recognition of professional networks in bridging academic research with policy and practice. These entities often facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue and contribute to the standardization of professional competencies [18].

Table 3. Distribution of Libyan Journals by Primary Affiliation Type.

Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Academies and Universities	85	68.5%
Associations and Syndicates	15	12.1%
Colleges and Institutes	14	11.4%
Research Centers	6	4.8%
Others	4	3.2%

A critical measure of a journal's integration into global research networks is its citation impact. Using Google Scholar, the citation distribution reveals a highly skewed pattern, where nearly two-thirds (67.8%) of Libyan journals received fewer than 50 citations in total, and only 5 journals (\approx 4%) exceeded 1,000 citations (Table 4). This pattern aligns with trends observed in other developing research systems, where publication output expands faster than global citation integration [19]. The dominance of journals with low citation counts reflects both limited indexation and constrained international collaboration, consistent with the findings of Nwagwu (2021) on African scholarly visibility [20]. However, the few high-performing outliers, such as journals surpassing 5,000 citations, illustrate the potential for impact when journals adopt open-access policies, English metadata, and inclusion in repositories like PubMed Central or DOAJ, as demonstrated in comparable NLM-indexed studies [21].

Table 4. Citation Impact of Libyan Journals based on Google Scholar.

Citation Range	Number of Journals	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
0 or No Data	41	33.1	33.1
1–50	43	34.7	67.8
51–200	22	17.7	85.5
201–500	9	7.3	92.8

501–1000	4	3.2	96.0
1001–5000	3	2.4	98.4
5001 and above	2	1.6	100.0

Conclusions

The Libyan journal landscape, as reflected in the DOLJ, mirrors the broader challenges confronting African scholarly communication. It is a system marked by commendable institutional commitment yet hindered by limited global visibility. Advancing this landscape calls for a unified national strategy that prioritizes quality over quantity. Strengthening the DOLJ as a tool for quality assurance and continuous monitoring is essential. Equally important is investing in capacity-building for journal editors, equipping them with best practices in editorial management and ethical publishing. A deliberate shift toward open access and digital preservation will enhance discoverability and long-term impact. Moreover, policies that reward publication in nationally recognized, quality-assured journals can foster a culture of excellence. Through these coordinated efforts, Libya can elevate its journals from fragmented institutional outputs to dynamic platforms that amplify its research voice on the global stage.

Author Contributions: **Ahmed Atia:** Conceptualization, data collection, analysis, manuscript drafting, final manuscript review. **Arwa Tomzini:** Literature review, data interpretation, manuscript editing. **Eshraq Alsherif:** Statistical analysis, table formatting, data validation, manuscript editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education, Tripoli, Libya (Approval No. 2025/DOLJ/01).

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this published article. Additional datasets are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank the Ministry of Higher Education for their technical support.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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