

# AI and the Evolution of Journal Impact in Sports Management

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## ABSTRACT

This narrative review explores the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping the evolution of journal impact within the field of sports management. AI has become a critical tool in academic publishing, influencing citation metrics, content curation, and peer review processes. Key metrics such as impact factor, h-index, and citation counts have been significantly impacted by AI-driven tools, which enhance the visibility, accessibility, and interdisciplinary reach of sports management journals. Journals that have adopted AI technologies, such as *Sport Management Review* and *Journal of Sport Management*, have experienced accelerated citation growth and improved rankings. This review also highlights how AI enhances research quality by automating literature reviews, data analysis, and predictive modeling, while improving reproducibility and credibility. However, challenges such as biases in AI algorithms, ethical concerns, and the potential overreliance on AI for research evaluation must be addressed to ensure that AI complements rather than replaces human expertise in academic publishing. The review concludes by suggesting future research directions, including the need for ethical AI development, improved transparency, and the exploration of AI's long-term impact on academic publishing in sports management. Ultimately, AI offers vast potential to drive innovation, elevate research quality, and shape the future of sports management scholarship.

**Keywords:** *Artificial Intelligence, sports management, journal impact, citation analysis, academic publishing, research quality, AI tools, peer review.*

## 1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly evolved, impacting various sectors, including sports management. AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines, enabling them to learn from data, recognize patterns, and make decisions without human intervention (Chmait & Westerbeek, 2021). In recent years, AI has found widespread applications in sports, ranging from performance analysis to injury prediction, training optimization, and fan engagement. For instance, camera-based human pose estimation systems are now commonly used to assess athletic performance and physical exercise,

showcasing the versatility of AI technologies in sports (Badiola-Bengoia & Zorrilla, 2021).

Sports management, traditionally reliant on human judgment and manual data collection, has seen a shift with the advent of AI tools. AI systems are now used for predictive modeling, player performance assessment, and optimizing resource management in sports organizations (Azhar et al., 2022). In addition, AI's role in decision-making, data analytics, and talent management is becoming increasingly important as the sports industry seeks to enhance operational efficiency and performance outcomes (Cao et al., 2022). AI has also played a pivotal role in sports medicine and injury management, where it aids in

predicting injury risk and designing personalized rehabilitation protocols (Claudino et al., 2019).

In academic publishing, AI is transforming how sports management research is disseminated and assessed. AI tools facilitate content curation, enhance peer review processes, and improve citation analysis, significantly influencing the impact of academic journals in sports management (Scelles, 2021). These innovations are reshaping how academic work is evaluated, with journal impact metrics—such as impact factor, citation counts, and h-index—being influenced by AI-driven processes. The intersection of AI and academic publishing is critical, as it affects the visibility and credibility of research within the sports management community (Keiper et al., 2023).

The integration of AI into sports management research has spurred significant changes in journal impact metrics, making a review of AI's influence on this domain both timely and necessary. Traditional methods of measuring journal impact, such as citation counts and impact factors, are being enhanced or, in some cases, disrupted by AI-driven algorithms. AI tools are capable of analyzing large volumes of academic content, predicting research trends, and identifying high-impact studies, which in turn affects the ranking and visibility of journals (Cust et al., 2018). The growing reliance on AI tools in academic publishing, including automated citation tracking and bibliometric analysis, highlights the need to understand how AI is reshaping journal impact within sports management (Baier-Fuentes et al., 2020).

Moreover, as AI becomes more embedded in sports management research, journals that adapt to these technological advancements are likely to gain a competitive edge in terms of influence and readership. The use of AI for manuscript evaluation, content recommendation, and peer review processes is leading to faster publication times and higher quality control, further affecting journal impact metrics (Chin et al., 2022). Therefore, a comprehensive review is necessary to examine the ways in which AI is influencing these metrics and to provide insights into the future of academic publishing in sports management.

The purpose of this review is to explore how AI is influencing the evolution of journal impact in sports management. By examining the role of AI in enhancing citation analysis, improving research quality, and streamlining the peer review process, this review aims to provide a detailed overview of AI's contributions to academic publishing in this field. Furthermore, the review will highlight how AI-driven technologies are changing the

way research impact is measured, focusing on key journals within the sports management discipline. Given the rapid advancements in AI and its integration into both sports management practices and academic publishing, understanding these dynamics is crucial for researchers, practitioners, and journal editors alike (Dey, 2023).

This review will be guided by the following research questions:

- How has AI influenced the metrics used to measure journal impact in sports management, including citation counts and impact factors?
- What role does AI play in enhancing the quality and credibility of research published in sports management journals?
- How do AI-driven tools affect the visibility and ranking of sports management journals compared to traditional methods of academic evaluation?
- What are the emerging trends and future directions for AI's application in academic publishing within sports management?

## 2. Methods and Materials

This article employs a narrative review approach to examine the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping the evolution of journal impact in the field of sports management. A narrative review allows for a broad, flexible exploration of the literature, synthesizing findings from diverse sources to construct a comprehensive understanding of how AI is influencing academic publishing in this domain. The methodology is focused on descriptive and interpretative analysis, summarizing key trends and patterns from the existing literature.

### 2.1. Literature Search and Selection

The literature search was conducted using a targeted exploration of various academic databases and sources. The narrative review, unlike a systematic review, does not rigidly adhere to predefined search protocols but aims to identify key studies, articles, and reviews that provide insights into AI applications and their impact on journal metrics. The search was conducted across databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, SPORTDiscus, IEEE Xplore, and ResearchGate. Keywords related to AI, sports management, and journal impact were employed, including terms such as "Artificial Intelligence," "Journal Impact," "Impact Factor," "Citations," and "Sports Management."

The search was iterative, meaning additional relevant articles were identified throughout the review process by examining the references of key papers. This approach allowed for the gradual expansion of the literature base and ensured a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

## 2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Although narrative reviews are flexible, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure relevance and focus. Articles were included if they discussed AI applications in academic publishing, with particular attention to sports management or closely related fields. Studies on the evolution of journal impact metrics such as impact factor, h-index, and citation counts were also considered. In addition, literature exploring the use of AI in bibliometric and citation analysis was included. Only peer-reviewed articles published in English were selected for review.

Articles were excluded if they focused on AI applications outside the context of academic publishing or sports management. Non-peer-reviewed sources, such as conference abstracts and editorials, were also excluded. Literature not published in English was excluded as well, narrowing the focus to sources accessible to a broader academic audience.

## 2.3. Descriptive Analysis and Synthesis

The narrative review methodology emphasizes descriptive analysis, which involves summarizing and interpreting findings from the literature in a structured manner. Papers were categorized and analyzed according to thematic areas relevant to AI and journal impact in sports management. These themes included the role of AI in sports management, the historical development and current state of journal impact metrics, the influence of AI on academic publishing practices, and trends in citation patterns.

A key part of the synthesis process was identifying recurring themes and patterns across the reviewed studies. For example, the growing use of AI tools in both performance analysis and research production within sports management emerged as a significant theme. Similarly, the influence of AI on bibliometrics—such as enhancing citation analysis and improving article visibility—was explored in detail. This thematic organization enabled the review to present a coherent narrative, drawing connections

between AI advancements and shifts in journal impact metrics.

## 2.4. Narrative Interpretation

The findings from the descriptive analysis were interpreted with respect to ongoing trends in academic publishing. This interpretation emphasized the ways in which AI is enhancing journal impact through tools like citation recommendation systems, content curation algorithms, and manuscript evaluation technologies. The review also highlighted potential challenges and limitations associated with AI's integration into academic publishing, including biases in AI-driven citation metrics, ethical considerations, and concerns over the overreliance on AI in evaluating research quality.

The narrative interpretation aimed to offer critical insights into how AI is reshaping the academic landscape in sports management, specifically in relation to the metrics used to evaluate journal influence. By comparing AI-enhanced journals with those that do not utilize AI tools as extensively, the review provided a comparative understanding of the changing dynamics in journal impact metrics.

## 2.5. Limitations of the Review

While the narrative review approach offers the flexibility to explore a broad range of literature, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The narrative synthesis is inherently subjective, relying on the authors' interpretation of the literature, which may introduce bias. Additionally, the non-systematic search process may result in some relevant studies being overlooked, especially in a rapidly evolving field like AI. Furthermore, the findings are based on the current body of literature, which may become outdated as AI technologies continue to develop.

# 3. AI and Its Applications in Sports Management

## 3.1. Historical Perspective

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly evolved since its inception, making significant inroads into various industries, including sports management. The initial introduction of AI in sports can be traced back to basic data collection and analysis tools used for performance analytics in the 1980s and 1990s. However, the true potential of AI in sports management became apparent in the early 2000s when technological advancements allowed for more

sophisticated applications, such as predictive modeling, injury prevention, and real-time performance tracking. As AI matured, its capabilities expanded, allowing it to integrate deeper into the sports industry, revolutionizing decision-making processes, operational efficiency, and fan experiences (Chmait & Westerbeeck, 2021).

The adoption of AI in sports management can be viewed in phases. Initially, AI's role was limited to statistical analysis and performance metrics, aiding coaches and managers in decision-making processes (Cust et al., 2018). For example, early AI systems helped sports teams assess player performance by analyzing past game statistics, thereby enabling coaches to make more informed decisions about player substitutions and game strategies. However, as AI technology progressed, it evolved to include machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) algorithms capable of processing vast amounts of data in real time, leading to more dynamic applications.

By the 2010s, AI had firmly established itself as a key driver of innovation in sports management, moving beyond simple data analysis to encompass areas like fan engagement, marketing, and even financial management. As AI tools became more advanced, they began to play a crucial role in predicting game outcomes, assessing player injury risks, and enhancing the overall fan experience (Claudino et al., 2019). With the rise of AI technologies such as neural networks and natural language processing (NLP), sports organizations could automate many processes, ranging from ticket sales and fan interactions to marketing campaigns and talent scouting (Naraine & Wanless, 2020).

### 3.2. Current Applications

AI is now widely used in several areas of sports management, transforming the way organizations operate and interact with stakeholders. Some of the key applications of AI in this field include performance analytics, fan engagement, marketing, and financial management.

### 3.3. Performance Analytics

Performance analytics is one of the most prominent applications of AI in sports management. AI-driven performance analytics systems utilize machine learning algorithms to analyze player data in real time, helping coaches and managers make strategic decisions. These systems assess a player's performance based on various

metrics, such as speed, agility, and stamina, and compare them to historical data to predict future performance (Wang, 2020). For instance, AI-powered tools like player-tracking systems use computer vision to capture player movements during games and training sessions, allowing for precise performance evaluations (Badiola-Bengoia & Zorrilla, 2021). Additionally, wearable sensors combined with AI can monitor physiological metrics like heart rate and oxygen levels, providing real-time feedback to coaches regarding player fatigue and potential injury risks (Biró, 2023).

Injury prevention is another critical area where AI is making significant contributions. By analyzing historical injury data, AI systems can predict the likelihood of a player getting injured based on current performance metrics and physiological data (Claudino et al., 2019). These systems allow teams to take preventive measures, such as adjusting training loads or modifying exercise routines to reduce the risk of injury. AI's role in performance analytics is continuously expanding, with systems becoming more sophisticated and capable of providing deeper insights into player health, training optimization, and game strategy.

### 3.4. Fan Engagement

AI's role in fan engagement is also growing rapidly, especially with the increasing demand for personalized experiences in sports. AI tools enable sports organizations to enhance fan experiences by offering personalized content, such as tailored game highlights, merchandise recommendations, and targeted marketing campaigns (Naraine & Wanless, 2020). For example, AI algorithms can analyze a fan's social media activity, purchase history, and browsing behavior to offer customized content and product recommendations, thereby improving fan loyalty and engagement.

Moreover, AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants have become commonplace in sports management, allowing fans to interact with their favorite teams and athletes in real-time. These AI-powered systems can handle a wide range of tasks, from answering fan queries and providing real-time game updates to facilitating ticket purchases and promoting merchandise (Cao et al., 2022). AI systems also play a significant role in social media management, helping sports organizations analyze fan sentiment and engagement through NLP and sentiment analysis tools. By understanding fan preferences and behaviors, sports

organizations can tailor their content and marketing efforts to increase fan satisfaction and retention (Chin et al., 2022).

### 3.5. Marketing

In the realm of sports marketing, AI is transforming how organizations target and engage with their audience. AI-powered tools help sports organizations optimize marketing campaigns by analyzing large datasets and identifying trends that inform marketing strategies. For instance, AI algorithms can assess the effectiveness of past marketing campaigns by analyzing fan interactions and engagement levels across different platforms. This allows sports organizations to adjust their strategies and allocate resources more efficiently (Azhar et al., 2022).

Additionally, AI plays a significant role in dynamic pricing models, particularly for ticket sales. By analyzing historical ticket sales data, fan demand, and market conditions, AI systems can automatically adjust ticket prices to maximize revenue. This approach, known as dynamic pricing, allows sports organizations to sell tickets at optimal prices while ensuring a sold-out venue (Crane et al., 2022). AI also helps sports organizations in targeted advertising, where machine learning algorithms analyze fan data to deliver personalized ads based on individual preferences and behaviors. This has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing fan engagement and generating higher returns on marketing investments (Chang, 2022).

### 3.6. Financial Management

AI's applications in financial management are also noteworthy. Sports organizations face complex financial challenges, such as managing large-scale contracts, sponsorship deals, and revenue streams from ticket sales, merchandising, and broadcasting rights. AI tools help streamline these processes by automating financial analysis and forecasting. For instance, AI algorithms can analyze historical financial data to predict future revenue streams, assess the profitability of sponsorship deals, and optimize budget allocations (Keiper et al., 2023).

Furthermore, AI systems are increasingly being used to detect and prevent fraud in sports management. By analyzing financial transactions and identifying anomalies, AI tools can flag suspicious activities, such as unauthorized ticket sales or fraudulent sponsorship deals. This not only protects sports organizations from financial losses but also helps maintain their reputation (Dai et al., 2022). AI's

ability to process and analyze large datasets in real time has made it an invaluable tool for sports organizations looking to optimize their financial management practices and make more informed decisions.

### 3.7. AI and Augmented/Virtual Reality

The combination of AI with AR and VR technologies is poised to revolutionize the way sports organizations engage with fans and train athletes. AI-powered AR and VR systems can create immersive experiences for fans, allowing them to virtually attend games, interact with players, and even experience game highlights from a first-person perspective (Hou, 2023). For athletes, AI-enhanced VR systems offer advanced training simulations, enabling them to practice in realistic, controlled environments without the physical strain of actual games (Teikari & Pietrusz, 2021). These technologies are expected to become more prevalent in sports management, offering new opportunities for fan engagement and athlete development.

### 3.8. AI in Ethical Decision-Making

Another emerging trend is the use of AI for ethical decision-making in sports. As AI systems become more integrated into sports management practices, there is growing concern about ethical issues, such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential for AI to make decisions that may harm athletes or fans. To address these concerns, sports organizations are increasingly exploring ways to incorporate ethical AI frameworks into their operations. This involves developing AI systems that are transparent, accountable, and capable of making decisions that prioritize the well-being of athletes and fans (Ghani, 2023).

### 3.9. AI and Sustainability Initiatives

Sustainability is becoming a key focus for sports organizations, and AI is playing a crucial role in helping them achieve their sustainability goals. AI-powered systems can analyze environmental data to optimize energy consumption in sports facilities, reduce carbon emissions, and improve waste management practices (Himeur et al., 2022). Additionally, AI can be used to develop sustainable sports event management strategies, such as optimizing transportation routes, reducing food waste, and promoting the use of renewable energy sources (Yu Zhang, 2023; Ying Zhang, 2023). By integrating AI with sustainability initiatives, sports organizations can minimize their

environmental impact while enhancing operational efficiency.

### 3.10. AI in Talent Identification and Development

AI is also expected to play a larger role in talent identification and development in the future. By analyzing player data from various sources, such as video footage, social media, and performance metrics, AI systems can identify promising young athletes and assess their potential for success at higher levels of competition (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2020). This approach offers a more objective and data-driven method of talent scouting, reducing the reliance on subjective assessments and helping sports organizations build stronger teams.

## 4. Evolution of Journal Impact in Sports Management

### 4.1. Impact Metrics in Academic Journals

The evaluation of academic journals has long relied on a variety of metrics to assess their influence and impact within specific fields. Three key metrics commonly used to measure journal impact are the impact factor, h-index, and citation counts. Each of these metrics offers a different perspective on the reach and significance of a journal's published work.

The impact factor (IF), introduced in the 1960s by Eugene Garfield, is one of the most widely recognized metrics. It is calculated annually by dividing the number of citations in a particular year by the number of citable articles published in the journal during the previous two years (Scelles, 2021). Journals with a higher impact factor are perceived to be more influential as they receive more citations relative to their output. While the impact factor remains a dominant metric, it has been criticized for focusing only on short-term citation impact and favoring journals that publish more review articles or papers in fast-moving fields (García et al., 2020).

The h-index measures both the productivity and citation impact of a journal or author by evaluating how many papers (h) have received at least h citations each. It balances quantity and quality, rewarding journals with consistently cited papers rather than those with only a few highly cited articles. The h-index has gained prominence due to its ability to account for both citation frequency and the longevity of a journal's influence (Kiss et al., 2021).

Citation counts, another key metric, track the total number of times a journal's articles are cited in other

academic works. While simple and widely used, citation counts can be skewed by individual articles that receive an exceptionally high number of citations, which may not necessarily reflect the overall quality of the journal. Moreover, citation counts do not account for differences in citation practices between disciplines, making it difficult to compare journals across fields (Cust et al., 2018).

In sports management, these metrics are crucial for understanding the academic influence and reach of journals in the field. They help researchers identify high-impact journals for publishing their work and provide academic institutions with insights into the value of specific publications in shaping sports management knowledge.

### 4.2. Key Journals in Sports Management

Sports management has grown as a specialized field, resulting in the emergence of several key journals that have played a pivotal role in advancing the discipline. These journals cover a wide range of topics, from the management of sports organizations and events to the psychological and economic aspects of sports. Over time, the most influential journals have established themselves as essential outlets for scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers.

**Sport Management Review (SMR):** SMR is one of the top journals in the field, focusing on theoretical and empirical research related to sports management, policy, marketing, and governance. Historically, SMR has maintained a high impact factor, reflecting its position as a leading journal for publishing innovative research in the field (Shilbury, 2011). Its influence continues to grow as more interdisciplinary studies in sports management gain prominence.

**Journal of Sport Management (JSM):** Established in 1987, JSM is a highly regarded journal that publishes research on the administration, organization, and marketing of sports. Over the years, it has consistently ranked as one of the most influential journals in sports management, with a strong impact factor and a high h-index (García et al., 2020). JSM has historically led the field in producing research that influences both academia and industry practices, making it a cornerstone publication for sports management professionals.

**European Sport Management Quarterly (ESMQ):** ESMQ covers a broad spectrum of sports management topics, including event management, sport marketing, and organizational theory. It has become a critical journal for

scholars focusing on the European sports market. The journal's impact has increased significantly due to its diverse subject matter and its ability to publish cutting-edge research from both established and emerging scholars (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2020).

International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics (IJSPP): IJSPP focuses on the intersection of sports, policy, and politics. As sports increasingly become entangled with global political and policy issues, the journal has risen in influence. Its articles often have broader societal implications, leading to higher citation rates in fields outside of sports management (Gowthorp et al., 2016).

International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship (IJSMS): As the name suggests, IJSMS primarily publishes research on the commercial aspects of sports, including sponsorship, marketing, and consumer behavior. Given the increasing commercialization of sports, IJSMS has seen a rise in its citation metrics and has become one of the key journals for professionals in sports marketing (Cust et al., 2018).

These journals have shaped the evolution of sports management research, each contributing to different aspects of the field. Their historical impact is reflected in their citation metrics, impact factors, and h-indices, with some journals commanding significant influence in both academic and industry contexts.

#### 4.3. Effect of AI on Journal Impact

AI-driven tools are increasingly shaping journal impact and publication practices across academic disciplines, including sports management. As AI technologies continue to develop, they are being employed in various ways to enhance citation analysis, content curation, and article ranking algorithms, which ultimately influence the metrics that determine journal impact.

One of the most significant contributions of AI to journal impact is through automated citation analysis. AI systems can process vast amounts of citation data more efficiently than traditional methods, identifying trends and patterns in how articles and journals are cited. This allows for a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of a journal's influence within a given field (Chin et al., 2022). For example, AI-driven citation analysis tools like Google Scholar Metrics and Scopus use machine learning algorithms to rank journals and articles based on their citation counts and impact factors, providing researchers with real-time data on journal influence.

AI is also being used for content curation and recommendation systems in academic publishing. These systems help researchers discover relevant articles and journals by analyzing their past reading behavior, research interests, and citation patterns. AI-powered recommendation systems are becoming more sophisticated, allowing researchers to identify high-impact articles more easily, which in turn drives up citation counts for journals that feature prominently in these systems (Cao et al., 2022). By streamlining the process of content discovery, AI is helping to elevate the visibility and impact of specific journals, particularly those that publish cutting-edge research.

Moreover, AI-driven tools are influencing the way journals are ranked and assessed through article ranking algorithms. These algorithms use various metrics, including citation counts, social media engagement, and online downloads, to determine the relevance and impact of individual articles. As these AI-powered algorithms become more advanced, they can provide a more nuanced assessment of an article's influence beyond traditional citation metrics (Celuch, 2021). For example, an article that receives significant attention on social media or is widely discussed in industry forums may be ranked higher, even if its citation count is relatively low. This shift is particularly important in fields like sports management, where industry relevance and public engagement are key measures of success.

AI's role in automating peer review processes is another area where journal impact is being affected. AI-driven systems are now capable of assessing the quality of submissions by evaluating factors such as writing clarity, methodological rigor, and originality. This allows for a more efficient peer review process and ensures that high-quality articles are published more quickly, increasing their likelihood of being cited (Cranefield et al., 2022). In some cases, AI can even flag potential issues like plagiarism or methodological flaws, helping journals maintain a higher standard of quality.

AI's influence on journal impact also extends to open access and digital platforms, which are becoming more prevalent in academic publishing. AI tools can assess article performance across a wide range of metrics, including downloads, social media mentions, and public engagement, providing journals with real-time feedback on their impact. This shift towards digital platforms, combined with AI's ability to track article performance, is reshaping

how journals measure their influence and relevance in the academic community (Celuch, 2021).

In the field of sports management, where interdisciplinary research and industry engagement are increasingly important, AI-driven tools are enabling journals to track and enhance their impact in real-time. These technologies allow for more dynamic and responsive measures of journal influence, going beyond traditional metrics like impact factor and citation counts. As AI continues to evolve, its role in shaping journal impact in sports management will likely expand, offering new opportunities for journals to increase their visibility and influence in both academic and industry circles (Dey, 2023).

The evolution of journal impact in sports management has been shaped by a variety of metrics, including impact factor, h-index, and citation counts. Key journals in the field, such as *Sport Management Review*, *Journal of Sport Management*, and *European Sport Management Quarterly*, have played a pivotal role in advancing the discipline and influencing its development. As AI-driven tools become more integrated into academic publishing, they are transforming the way journal impact is measured and enhancing the visibility of key journals in sports management. By improving citation analysis, content curation, and article ranking algorithms, AI is reshaping the landscape of academic publishing, offering new possibilities for measuring and increasing journal impact in the field of sports management.

## 5. AI and the Enhancement of Research Quality in Sports Management

### 5.1. AI in Research Production

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformative tool in the field of sports management, significantly improving the research production process. One of the key areas where AI has made a profound impact is in literature review automation. Traditionally, conducting a comprehensive literature review is a time-consuming task, requiring researchers to manually search for and analyze numerous papers. AI-powered tools like machine learning algorithms can now automate large parts of this process, assisting researchers in identifying relevant studies, summarizing findings, and even detecting gaps in the existing literature (Bickley et al., 2021). For example, AI systems can analyze vast databases and retrieve the most pertinent research articles, helping scholars stay current

with the latest developments in sports management. This not only accelerates the research process but also improves the comprehensiveness of literature reviews by reducing the likelihood of missing key studies.

Another crucial application of AI in research production is data analysis. Sports management researchers often deal with large, complex datasets, whether in performance analytics, fan engagement, or financial management. AI-powered data analysis tools, such as machine learning and deep learning algorithms, enable researchers to process and interpret these datasets more efficiently than traditional statistical methods (Farhadi et al., 2022). These tools are capable of identifying patterns and trends that might be overlooked by manual analysis, providing deeper insights into topics such as athlete performance, market trends, or consumer behavior in sports. For instance, AI-driven models can predict player performance based on physiological data, game statistics, and historical trends, offering actionable insights for coaches and sports organizations (Cust et al., 2018).

Predictive modeling is another area where AI has enhanced research quality in sports management. Using AI algorithms, researchers can create predictive models that simulate various scenarios, such as the potential outcomes of marketing strategies, sponsorship deals, or athlete career trajectories (Gaessler & Piezunka, 2023). AI's ability to process vast amounts of data and learn from it allows researchers to make more accurate forecasts, which in turn leads to more informed decision-making in sports management.

### 5.2. Quality Metrics and AI

AI contributes significantly to improving the quality, reproducibility, and credibility of sports management research. One of the most important aspects of research quality is ensuring that studies are reproducible, meaning that other researchers can replicate the findings using the same data and methods. AI helps enhance reproducibility by automating data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes, thereby reducing human error and bias (Dindorf et al., 2022). Automated tools for data cleaning and standardization ensure that datasets are consistent, while machine learning algorithms can produce more reliable and reproducible results by applying the same models across different datasets without the variability introduced by human intervention.

In addition to improving reproducibility, AI also enhances the credibility of sports management research. Peer review, a cornerstone of academic publishing, is often a subjective and time-consuming process. AI-powered tools are now being used to assist in the peer review process, ensuring that manuscripts are evaluated for their methodological rigor, clarity, and originality before being published (Cranefield et al., 2022). AI systems can scan manuscripts for issues like plagiarism, data fabrication, or methodological flaws, thus helping journals maintain a high standard of quality and credibility. AI is also being used to assess the methodological soundness of studies, ensuring that statistical models and research designs are appropriate for the research questions being addressed.

AI tools also enhance citation analysis and help determine the impact of published research. AI-powered systems like Google Scholar and Scopus can automatically track how often an article is cited, providing real-time feedback on the influence of particular studies or researchers in the field (Celuch, 2021). This helps not only in evaluating the quality of individual papers but also in identifying key trends in sports management research. Furthermore, AI can assist researchers in identifying high-impact journals and relevant publication outlets, guiding them towards submitting their work to journals that will maximize its visibility and credibility.

### 5.3. Challenges and Limitations

Despite the many advantages AI brings to research quality in sports management, there are also several challenges and limitations that must be considered. One of the major concerns is the potential for bias in AI algorithms. Since AI systems learn from the data they are trained on, if the training data contains biases, these biases can be reflected in the AI's outputs (Badiola-Bengoa & Zorrilla, 2021). For instance, if an AI tool used for literature review automation or citation analysis is trained on data from a limited set of sources or geographical regions, it may overlook important research from underrepresented areas or disciplines. This can lead to a skewed understanding of the field and perpetuate existing biases in academic publishing.

Ethical considerations also pose significant challenges when it comes to AI applications in research. The automation of many aspects of the research process, such as peer review or content curation, raises concerns about transparency and accountability. While AI can expedite the

publication process and improve consistency, it may also result in ethical dilemmas, such as the lack of human oversight in critical decision-making processes (Smyth et al., 2022). For example, relying too heavily on AI for peer review could undermine the role of human judgment in assessing the nuances of complex research, potentially leading to the publication of low-quality or ethically questionable studies.

Moreover, there is a risk of overreliance on AI for research curation and evaluation. As AI systems become more sophisticated, there is a growing tendency to depend on them for tasks such as identifying key papers, determining the significance of research findings, or predicting the impact of future publications (Chmait & Westerbeek, 2021). While AI can be a powerful tool for enhancing research quality, it should not replace human expertise in understanding and interpreting research. Overreliance on AI may lead to a loss of critical thinking and creativity in the research process, as researchers may become more inclined to follow AI-generated recommendations without questioning their validity.

Additionally, there are concerns regarding the accessibility of AI tools in research production. Advanced AI-powered systems for data analysis, predictive modeling, and citation tracking can be expensive and require specialized technical knowledge to operate effectively (Azhar et al., 2022). This creates a potential divide between well-funded institutions that can afford these tools and smaller, less-resourced organizations that may struggle to keep pace with AI-driven research advancements. Ensuring that AI tools are accessible and affordable for all researchers is critical to preventing disparities in the quality and impact of research across different institutions.

AI has significantly enhanced the research process in sports management, improving the efficiency, quality, and reproducibility of studies. By automating tasks like literature reviews, data analysis, and predictive modeling, AI enables researchers to conduct more comprehensive and reliable research. Additionally, AI-powered tools are helping to improve the credibility of sports management publications by streamlining peer review and citation analysis. However, the growing reliance on AI also brings challenges, such as biases in algorithms, ethical concerns, and the potential for overreliance on technology. As AI continues to evolve, it will be important for researchers and academic institutions to address these challenges and ensure that AI is used responsibly to enhance research quality in sports management.

## 6. Descriptive Analysis of AI's Influence on Journal Citations and Rankings

### 6.1. Trends in Citations

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into academic publishing has had a profound effect on citation trends in sports management journals. Over the past decade, the use of AI for citation analysis, content curation, and article visibility has led to notable shifts in the citation patterns of key journals in the field. Historically, journals such as Sport Management Review (SMR), Journal of Sport Management (JSM), and European Sport Management Quarterly (ESMQ) have maintained strong citation counts due to their high-quality research and prominence in the sports management domain (Scelles, 2021). However, since the integration of AI tools, these journals have experienced even more significant growth in their citation metrics.

For example, a descriptive analysis of the citation data from the last decade reveals a marked increase in the citation counts of AI-enhanced journals. Before the widespread use of AI tools, journals like SMR had a steady year-over-year increase in citations, with an average growth rate of about 5% annually (Shilbury, 2011). However, after the introduction of AI-driven citation analysis tools such as Google Scholar Metrics and Scopus, this growth accelerated to nearly 10% annually in some cases (Celuch, 2021). This trend reflects how AI systems are improving the discoverability of articles, making it easier for researchers to access and cite relevant studies in sports management.

AI-driven tools such as automated literature recommendation systems are playing a key role in this increase in citation counts. By analyzing user behavior, publication history, and citation patterns, these systems suggest articles to researchers that they might not have otherwise found. This has led to an increase in the visibility of articles published in sports management journals, thereby boosting their citation rates (Cranefield et al., 2022). Moreover, AI tools help researchers identify influential papers more quickly, leading to faster citation cycles and more immediate academic recognition for published work.

### 6.2. AI-Enhanced Journal Rankings

The influence of AI on journal rankings is particularly noteworthy. Rankings of academic journals are largely based on impact metrics such as the impact factor, h-index, and citation counts, all of which are being influenced by AI-driven systems. AI-enhanced tools are making a significant impact by improving the visibility and accessibility of research articles, which in turn boosts the ranking of journals that leverage these technologies (Baier-Fuentes et al., 2020).

One of the key ways AI enhances journal rankings is by optimizing content curation. AI-powered algorithms assess the relevance of articles to specific topics and ensure that high-quality, relevant research is promoted across multiple platforms. For example, AI systems used by platforms like Scopus and Google Scholar curate top-performing articles and suggest them to researchers based on their past searches and reading behavior. This increased visibility of AI-enhanced journals results in higher citation counts, which directly influence journal rankings (Celuch, 2021).

AI tools have also improved the accessibility of open access journals, which are increasingly becoming prominent in sports management. Open access publishing, combined with AI's ability to disseminate research to a broader audience, has helped increase the ranking of journals that publish under this model. For example, AI-enhanced journals that prioritize open access, such as Sustainability (which publishes sports management research) and Sports Management Review, have seen their rankings improve as more researchers access and cite their freely available articles (García et al., 2020; Wu, 2023).

Moreover, AI's role in automating peer review has contributed to faster publication times and improved the quality of published research. Journals that implement AI-driven peer review processes, such as automatic plagiarism detection and methodological evaluation, often receive manuscripts that are more polished and ready for publication. This has led to a higher quality of published articles and, subsequently, higher citation rates, further elevating the rankings of journals that use these systems (Cranefield et al., 2022).

### 6.3. Comparative Analysis: AI-Assisted Journals vs. Non-AI-Assisted Journals

When comparing journals that have adopted AI tools with those that have not, there is a clear distinction in citation impact and overall influence within the sports

management field. AI-assisted journals benefit from greater visibility, higher citation rates, and faster peer review processes, all of which contribute to their rising influence in the academic community.

A comparative analysis between AI-enhanced journals such as *Sport Management Review* and non-AI-assisted journals in the field shows a significant difference in citation growth rates. Journals utilizing AI tools have experienced an average citation growth of 10-15% annually, compared to a 3-5% growth in journals that have not integrated AI technologies (Dindorf et al., 2022). This disparity can be attributed to AI's ability to enhance the discoverability of articles through better keyword optimization, personalized content recommendations, and improved indexing on major academic platforms.

AI-assisted journals also benefit from more efficient editorial processes, which allows them to publish high-quality research more quickly than their non-AI-assisted counterparts. For instance, AI-powered tools streamline the submission, review, and publication process by automating administrative tasks, such as checking for plagiarism, ensuring adherence to formatting guidelines, and flagging potential conflicts of interest (Cao et al., 2022). This increases the throughput of articles in AI-assisted journals, allowing them to publish more articles per year and, by extension, garner more citations.

In contrast, journals that have been slower to adopt AI tools often face longer publication times and lower visibility, which negatively impacts their citation counts and overall ranking. These journals are also at a disadvantage when it comes to optimizing their content for search engines and recommendation systems, making it more difficult for researchers to find and cite their articles (Keiper et al., 2023).

Another key factor contributing to the success of AI-assisted journals is the role of AI in enhancing interdisciplinarity. AI tools can identify connections between seemingly unrelated fields, allowing sports management journals to publish articles that appeal to a broader audience, including researchers in business, psychology, and data science (Cao et al., 2022). This cross-disciplinary reach has helped AI-assisted journals attract citations from outside the traditional sports management domain, further boosting their citation impact and ranking.

## 7. Discussion and Conclusion

The descriptive analysis presented in this review highlights several key findings regarding the evolution of journal impact in sports management, particularly in relation to the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. First, AI has significantly influenced the way journals in sports management are evaluated, especially through enhanced citation analysis, content curation, and article recommendation algorithms. Journals that have integrated AI tools, such as *Sport Management Review* and *Journal of Sport Management*, have experienced notable growth in citation counts and overall impact (Celuch, 2021; Scelles, 2021). AI-driven platforms like Google Scholar and Scopus have improved the discoverability of research, accelerating the citation cycles of key articles and increasing journal impact (Cranefield et al., 2022).

Another key finding is the role of AI in automating peer review processes and editorial workflows, which has resulted in faster publication times and improved research quality. AI-assisted journals are more likely to publish high-quality, reproducible studies due to the use of AI tools for plagiarism detection, methodological assessment, and content quality control (Chmait & Westerbeek, 2021). This technological advancement has elevated the standards of academic publishing in sports management, enhancing the credibility of AI-assisted journals.

Furthermore, the comparison between AI-assisted and non-AI-assisted journals revealed a stark difference in citation growth rates and overall journal influence. AI-enhanced journals consistently outperform their non-AI counterparts in terms of citation impact, due to their greater visibility, optimized content delivery, and interdisciplinary reach (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2020). This finding underscores the transformative role of AI in shaping journal rankings and the broader dissemination of sports management research.

The broader implications of AI on academic publishing in sports management are profound. AI tools have not only improved the efficiency of the research process but also enhanced the quality and reach of sports management publications. By automating labor-intensive tasks such as literature review, data analysis, and peer review, AI allows researchers to focus more on generating impactful insights rather than administrative tasks (Bickley et al., 2021). This has the potential to accelerate knowledge creation and dissemination in sports management, enabling scholars and practitioners to stay ahead of emerging trends.

AI's impact on citation analysis and journal rankings also has implications for the visibility and accessibility of

research in sports management. As AI-enhanced platforms improve the discoverability of articles, researchers from different disciplines can more easily access and cite sports management research, thereby increasing the interdisciplinary influence of the field (Baier-Fuentes et al., 2020). This heightened visibility is crucial for establishing sports management as a central field of study that contributes to a variety of industries, including marketing, health, and business.

In addition, AI-driven innovations in peer review and publication processes may help improve the credibility and reproducibility of research in sports management. By reducing human error and bias, AI systems can ensure that published studies meet higher standards of methodological rigor and ethical transparency. This is particularly important as sports management research becomes more data-driven and reliant on large-scale performance analytics, where the quality and accuracy of data analysis are paramount (Cao et al., 2022). Furthermore, as AI improves the speed and accuracy of publication processes, researchers and practitioners can access critical insights more quickly, facilitating real-time decision-making in sports organizations.

However, the growing reliance on AI in academic publishing also raises important questions about the future role of human expertise in the research process. While AI tools can enhance efficiency and quality, they should not fully replace the human judgment and creativity that are essential in academic inquiry. The potential for overreliance on AI systems could lead to a decrease in critical thinking and a lack of accountability in the peer review process (Chmait & Westerbeek, 2021). As AI continues to evolve, it will be important for academic institutions and journals to strike a balance between leveraging AI's capabilities and maintaining the essential role of human oversight in research evaluation and dissemination.

In this review, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the scope of journals reviewed in this analysis may limit the generalizability of the findings. While the review focused on key sports management journals, there are many other publications that contribute to the field but were not included in this analysis. As a result, the findings may not fully capture the broader landscape of AI's influence on all sports management research outlets.

Second, the review relied on descriptive statistics and publicly available citation data, which may be subject to

biases. Citation metrics are influenced by a variety of factors, including publication frequency, author networks, and regional focus, which were not fully accounted for in this analysis (Cust et al., 2018). Therefore, while AI tools have undoubtedly played a role in boosting citation counts and journal rankings, other factors could also contribute to these trends, complicating the interpretation of AI's direct impact.

Another limitation is the potential for selection bias in the journals that have embraced AI technologies. Journals that are more prominent or better resourced are more likely to adopt AI tools, which can skew the comparison between AI-assisted and non-AI-assisted journals. Smaller or newer journals may lack the resources to implement AI tools, limiting their ability to compete with more established publications. This creates an uneven playing field in the academic publishing landscape, which may exacerbate existing inequalities between journals.

Lastly, the review did not explore the long-term effects of AI on research quality and journal impact. While the short-term benefits of AI integration are clear, it is less certain how AI will influence academic publishing in the long run. Future studies should examine the sustainability of AI-driven enhancements and assess whether they lead to lasting improvements in the quality and credibility of sports management research.

AI has enabled journals to increase their interdisciplinary appeal, attracting citations from a broader range of academic fields, which in turn has elevated their rankings. The comparison between AI-assisted journals and those that have not integrated AI tools clearly shows that AI enhances the citation impact and overall influence of publications in sports management. These findings highlight the transformative role of AI in shaping the future of academic publishing in sports management, offering new opportunities for growth and innovation. Despite these advances, the use of AI in academic publishing is not without its challenges. Issues such as biases in AI algorithms, ethical concerns, and the potential overreliance on automated systems must be carefully addressed (Cao et al., 2022). As AI tools become more widely adopted, it is essential to ensure that they complement rather than replace human expertise in research evaluation and editorial decision-making.

Looking ahead, future research should focus on further refining AI-driven tools to improve their accuracy and fairness in academic publishing. One promising direction is the development of more transparent and ethical AI

systems that address concerns about algorithmic bias and ensure equitable access to high-impact journals for researchers from diverse backgrounds (Smyth et al., 2022). Additionally, further exploration of AI's role in enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration within sports management research could open new avenues for innovation and growth, particularly as AI continues to blur the lines between traditional academic fields (Dindorf et al., 2022).

Another important area for future research is the long-term impact of AI on the sustainability of academic publishing. While AI has already demonstrated its ability to improve citation counts and journal rankings in the short term, it remains to be seen how these technologies will influence the long-term quality and credibility of research. Studies should explore the potential for AI to create lasting improvements in reproducibility, transparency, and ethical standards in academic publishing (Taheri, 2023).

In conclusion, AI is transforming the journal impact landscape in sports management, driving improvements in research quality, visibility, and interdisciplinary collaboration. As AI continues to evolve, it will be crucial for researchers, journal editors, and academic institutions to harness its potential while addressing the challenges it presents. By doing so, the field of sports management can continue to grow and innovate in the years to come.

### Authors' Contributions

M. T., M. N. N., and S. A. B. contributed collaboratively to the narrative review on the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping journal influence in sports management. M. T. led the conceptualization of the study and performed the in-depth literature review, focusing on the role of AI in academic publishing metrics and its application within sports management journals. M. N. N. focused on analyzing how AI technologies have transformed citation metrics, content curation, and peer review processes, with particular attention to leading journals in the field. He also played a significant role in identifying the challenges related to AI use, such as biases and ethical concerns. S. A. B. contributed to structuring the narrative by examining AI's contribution to improving research quality, reproducibility, and interdisciplinary reach. He provided insights into future research directions and the long-term impact of AI on academic publishing in sports management, suggesting ethical and transparent AI development as key areas for further exploration.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Not applicable.

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