

Running Head: Top Cited Research

TOP CITED RESEARCH OVER FIFTEEN YEARS IN *SPORTS BIOMECHANICS*

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In accordance with Taylor & Francis policy and my ethical obligation as a researcher, I am reporting that I serve on the editorial board and publish in the journal under study that may be affected by the research in this report.

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Abstract

This study tested the hypothesis of the strong scholar perception of the journal *Sports Biomechanics* with a bibliometric analysis of top cited articles. Three major databases, *Google Scholar*, *Scopus*, and *Web of Science*, were searched for the most cited articles published in *Sports Biomechanics* for the first fifteen years (2002-2016) of publication. The top twenty (4%) cited articles from each database were qualitatively analysed for research themes and descriptive statistics calculated for citations and citation rates. The top cited articles published in *Sports Biomechanics* had high citation rates and included several citation classics, indicating strong contributions to the advancement of knowledge in applied biomechanics and beyond. The results support previous high ratings of the journal by sport and exercise biomechanics scholars and refute the biased and lower ranking based on the *Web of Science* Impact Factor. There was moderate (40-70%) agreement on the top twenty cited articles between the three databases due to differences in indexing and temporal coverage.

Keywords: bibliometrics, impact, journal, usage

18 Introduction

19 The fields of bibliometrics, scientometrics, and informetrics focus on the
 20 statistical evaluation of science through examination of publications and citations. A
 21 wide variety of citation metrics are available that provide information on the impact or
 22 influence of journals, specific publications, and authors (Bornmann & Leydesdorff, 2013;
 23 Tahira, Abdullah, Alias, & Bakri, 2016; Wildgaard, Schneider, & Larsen, 2014).
 24 Bibliometric analyses of citation metrics have been used to evaluate the influence of
 25 research in disciplinary fields (e.g., Khoo, Li, & Ansari, 2018; Shadagan, Roig,
 26 HajGhandari, & Reid, 2010), movement activities (e.g., Knudson, 2012; Marquez-Lara,
 27 Stone, Luo, Parker, Sharma, & Freehill, 2017), and specific journals (e.g., Coronado,
 28 Wurtzel, Simon, Riddle, & George, 2011).

29 The journal *Sports Biomechanics* is the primary publication of the International
 30 Society of Biomechanics in Sports (ISBS), focusing on generating new knowledge and
 31 practical applications of that knowledge to benefit sports practitioners. The influence of
 32 *Sports Biomechanics* has grown through its acceptance for indexing and impact factor
 33 (IF) calculation in Clarivate Analytics *Web of Science*, as well as its growth in numbers
 34 of issues and articles published annually. The 2016 5-year IF for the journal (1.4) places
 35 it in the 4th quartile of journals in the 'sports science' category of *WS*. While the IF has
 36 some utility in library science, it suffers from several biases that make it a poor indicator
 37 of overall quality of a journal or the articles it publishes (Kurmish, 2003; Moed, 2002;
 38 Seglen, 1992, 1997; Zhang, Rousseau, & Siversten, 2017). Numerous commentaries
 39 and organizations do not recommend the use of the IF in evaluating the quality of
 40 journals or articles published in them (Declaration on Research Assessment, 2015;

41 Hicks, Wouters, Waltman, de Rijcke, & Rafols, 2015). Use of the IF as a surrogate
42 estimate of the impact of research published in *Sports Biomechanics* is likely biased
43 due to the low citation rate and small size of the field. Overemphasis of the journal IF
44 may disadvantage authors of these scholarly contributions to applied sport and exercise
45 biomechanics in the journal.

46 Initial evidence supports the hypothesis of greater scholarly influence of *Sports*
47 *Biomechanics* than indicated by the IF. Analyses of several citation metrics for *Sports*
48 *Biomechanics* indicate second quartile impact and prestige of the journal within
49 kinesiology/exercise science journals (Knudson, 2013a; Knudson, 2013b).
50 Biomechanics scholar ratings of quality and impact of biomechanics journals also do not
51 correlate well (r^2 between 12 and 23%) with the IF (Knudson & Chow, 2008; Knudson &
52 Ostarello, 2008, 2010). *Sports Biomechanics* has been highly (top 18%) rated for
53 'quality or impact' by American Society of Biomechanics (ASB) members affiliating with
54 the 'Exercise and Sport Sciences' interest area (Knudson & Chow, 2008) and ISBS
55 members (Knudson & Ostarello, 2008). Disciplinary specificity of citation metrics and
56 perception of prestige are robust observations in journal evaluation research (Seglen,
57 1992, 1997; Zhang, Rousseau, & Sivertsen, 2017), even within a small field like
58 biomechanics (Knudson & Chow, 2008).

59 Given the likely difference in the perception of scholarly influence and prestige of
60 the journal *Sports Biomechanics* between biomechanics scholars and the biased use of
61 the IF, additional bibliometric data were needed on the journal. This study tested the
62 strong perception of the influence of *Sports Biomechanics* by biomechanics scholars by
63 examining the bibliometrics of the top cited articles from the first 15 years (2002 – 2016)

64 of its publication. Secondary purposes included documentation of content areas in
 65 sports biomechanics of recent interest and high influence, as well as confirmation of
 66 citation rates previously reported for journals (Knudson, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2017),
 67 citation classics (Knudson, 2014, 2015), and influential scholars (Knudson, 2015c;
 68 2017, Knudson, 2018) in biomechanics. It was hypothesized that top cited articles from
 69 *Sports Biomechanics* would have citation totals and citation rates indicating greater
 70 influence than the lower quartile influence implied by its most recent IF.

71 **Methods**

72 *Timeframe and Sample*

73 The influence of *Sports Biomechanics* was examined using citations in the peer-
 74 reviewed literature to articles published in the journal. Citation count is the most
 75 common metric documenting scholarly usage, a sub-domain of impact or influence
 76 (Bornmann & Daniel, 2008; Moed, 2002). Several large factor analyses also support the
 77 interpretation of citation count as a measure of scholarly usage (Bollen, Van de Sompel,
 78 Hagberg, & Chute, 2009; Franceschet, 2010; Leydesdorff, 2009; Zhou, Lu, & Li, 2012).

79 Since citations are time-dependent and accumulate over time, the study of top
 80 cited articles in *Sports Biomechanics* was limited to the first fifteen years (2002-2016) of
 81 publication. This large span of time provided the best compromise of breadth of time to
 82 document influence of the journal in the scientific literature and minimizing the negative
 83 effect of not having enough time to receive citations for the most recent articles (2017-
 84 2018). The two-year window for the IF calculation may be too short for a field like
 85 biomechanics that has a slower rate of citations (Knudson, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2017)
 86 than many other large and fast moving biomedical fields.

87 Over this fifteen-year period, *Sports Biomechanics* published 475 articles
88 indexed by the Elsevier *Scopus* database. To focus on the most influential contributions
89 of the journal to the scientific literature, this study examined the 20 most cited (Top 4%)
90 articles.

91 *Databases and Search*

92 To provide the most thorough examination of the potential influence of the
93 journal, the three major bibliometric databases were searched: *Google Scholar* (GS),
94 *Scopus* (SC), and *Web of Science* (WS). GS is the most comprehensive scholarly
95 search engine of diverse publications captured in a database by Google search
96 software. Elsevier SC is the world's largest scholarly abstract and citation database
97 covering journals, proceedings, and books since 1823, 1980, and 2005, respectively.
98 Clarivate Analytics *Web of Science* is perhaps the most well-known and selective
99 scholarly database. One study estimated the peer-reviewed journal coverage of GS,
100 SC, and WS at approximately 40, 20, and 10 thousand journals, respectively (Delgado-
101 Lopez-Cozar & Cabezas-Clavjo, 2013).

102 All three databases were searched for articles published in *Sports*
103 *Biomechanics* from 2002 until 2016. The results were then sorted by citations, checked
104 for errors and the twenty articles with the most citations identified. Authors, titles, total
105 citation count (C), and bibliographic information were recorded for each top 20 article.
106 The mean citation rate [$CPY = C \div (2018 - \text{year of publication})$] until the time of database
107 search was calculated for each article.

108 *Analysis*

109 Descriptive statistics (M , M_e , SD , and skew) were calculated for C and CPY.
110 Since bibliometric databases index different publications, the percentage agreement to
111 the top 20 cited articles between the databases was calculated. Percentage agreement
112 was the percentage of common articles within the top 20 articles in each database. A
113 content analysis of the most cited articles retrieved from all three databases was
114 performed. The percentage of kinds of articles (original research, review, and technical
115 note) and topics addressed by the most cited articles were collated and reported.

116 Results

117 The top 20 cited articles in *Sports Biomechanics* from 2002 to 2016 were
118 consistent across the three databases (Table 1), with 32 unique top cited articles
119 between the databases. Percentage agreement of top cited articles between GS, SC
120 and WS were 70% and 45% respectively. Agreement between SC and WS was lower at
121 40%. Top 20 cited articles in all databases had skewed ($\gamma = 2.5$ to 3.5) distributions.
122 Median citations to top articles were the largest from the GS database (98), with smaller
123 citations in the SC (53) and WS (34) databases. Median citation rates for these top
124 articles ranged from 4 to 9 citations per year.

125 Of the 32 unique, highly cited articles published in *Sports Biomechanics*, most
126 (78%) were original research reports, followed by reviews (19%), and one technical note
127 (3%). The most influential biomechanics topics within the top cited articles in the journal
128 were kicking and running (both 13%), followed by 9% for movement variability
129 swimming, throwing, and training/conditioning.

130

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Discussion and Implications

The current study provided new evidence of the scholarly influence of top twenty cited articles published in the first fifteen years of *Sports Biomechanics*. The top twenty citations to the journal from all databases were positively skewed which was consistent with most all citation data (Knudson, 2015a, 2015b; Seglen 1992, 1997). Eight articles met the usual standard ($C > 100$) for designation as citation classics (Table 1). The high total citation counts from all three databases indicate high usage of this research in the subsequent peer-reviewed literature.

The citation rates to these top cited articles ranged between 2 and 27 citations per year, also indicating consistent annual usage in subsequently published research. Median citation rates of these *Sports Biomechanics* articles were similar to mean and median citation rates to top 20-50 cited articles reported for several biomechanics journals (Knudson, 2014, 2015a, 2015). Typical citation rates in biomechanics journals tend to be above average within the sub-disciplines kinesiology/exercise science (Knudson, 2014, 2015a, 2015b), but lower than some large, fast biomedical fields (Owlia, Vasei, Goliaei, & Nassiri, 2011). These results indicate that articles in *Sports Biomechanics* are strong contributors to the scholarly literature beyond the immediate mission of the journal to advance application in sport and exercise.

The high citation counts and citation rates to these articles in *Sports Biomechanics* supported the hypothesis of greater influence of the journal than indicated by its WS IF. The high total C and CPY values, along with numerous citation classics ($C > 100$), indicate strong contributions by the journal to the advancement of knowledge in applied biomechanics and beyond. This strong academic influence is

155 impressive given the small size of this specialized biomechanics journal and the bias of
 156 the *WS IF* against small journals with moderate citation rates (Kurmish, 2003; Moed,
 157 2002; Seglen, 1992, 1997; Zhang, Rousseau, & Siversten, 2017).

158 The substantial influence of top cited articles in *Sports Biomechanics* from
 159 citation metrics were also consistent with the strong perceptions of ‘quality or impact’ of
 160 the journal by scholars interested in sport and exercise biomechanics (Knudson &
 161 Chow, 2008; Knudson & Ostarello, 2008). The high citation rate of these *Sports*
 162 *Biomechanics* articles also indicated that the journal might be more influential outside
 163 sport and exercise biomechanics than was apparent in the study of ASB scholars who
 164 tended to favour journals from their own research specializations within biomechanics
 165 (Knudson & Chow, 2008). The current results indicating strong influence of articles in
 166 *Sports Biomechanics* should be extended by further research focusing on disciplinary
 167 expert review of research quality. To date the only peer reviewed studies of the quality
 168 of biomechanics research methods has examined other journals than *Sports*
 169 *Biomechanics* (Knudson, 2005; Vagenas, Palaiothodorou, & Knudson, 2018).

170 Of interest to ISBS and the field of biomechanics are the influential research
 171 topics by articles published in the journal. Numerous original research studies of a wide
 172 variety of sports and fundamental movements in the journal were highly cited in these
 173 databases. The most common topics to become highly cited articles, however were on
 174 kicking and running. Other highly cited article topics included movement variability
 175 swimming, throwing, and training/conditioning.

176 What specific articles were ranked the highest by citations depended on the
 177 database searched and time since article publication. The top 20 citations according to

178 WS only include journals accepted into that database, so results of the search did not
179 consider articles before 2006. *Sports Biomechanics* was not accepted into this database
180 for indexing until that year. GS and SC searches produced higher citation counts, from
181 both indexing more sources and including older articles than WS. These data confirm
182 the influence of *Sports Biomechanics* in the scholarly literature is greater than is
183 indicated by the biased WS IF. Differences in numbers of articles indexed were the
184 likely cause of the moderate agreement in the top 20 cited articles between databases.
185 The effect of time since publication was most obvious in the different ranking of articles
186 based on CPY and C from the GS and SC databases (Table 1).

187 Given the applied mission of *Sports Biomechanics*, search results from GS and
188 SC may be more relevant to documenting widespread and applied influence of articles
189 published in the journal. Researchers should use multiple databases and consider the
190 weaknesses and errors in all databases (Delgado-Lopez-Cozar & Cabezas-Clavjo,
191 2013; Franceschini, Maisano, & Mastrogiacomo, 2016; Rossner, Van Epps, & Hill, 2007,
192 2008; The PLoS Medicine Editors, 2006; Walters, 2009) when conducting and
193 interpreting results of bibliometric studies.

194 This study had limitations that should be considered in interpreting the results.
195 The study focused on the most influential articles (top 4%) published by *Sports*
196 *Biomechanics*. While this methodology emphasized only highly influential articles, this is
197 likely representative of the usage of all journals, given the large skew of citation
198 distributions (Knudson, 2015a, 2015b; Seglen, 1992, 1997) and numerous uncited
199 articles (Knudson, 2015a, Stern, 1990; Van Dalen & Henkens, 2004). Consequently,
200 these data likely create an accurate representation of the overall scholarly

201 usage/influence of *Sports Biomechanics*. The time interval of the study was as large as
202 could be considered meaningful, however database search results of citations to articles
203 in a journal will change as time after publication increases and research trends change.
204 Citations of articles also only measure the academic usage domain of influence or
205 impact. The true quality of articles published in a journal are best determined by expert
206 disciplinary review. Despite these limitations, the results provide evidence of the
207 influence of articles and influential topics of research published in *Sports Biomechanics*.

208 **Conclusion**

209 Indexed citations in three databases indicated that the top twenty cited articles
210 published in *Sports Biomechanics* were likely influential in subsequently published peer-
211 reviewed literature. Several citation classics and articles with high mean citation rates
212 published in the journal indicate strong contributions to the advancement of knowledge
213 in applied biomechanics and beyond. These data also support previous high quality and
214 impact ratings of the journal by sport and exercise biomechanics scholars and refute the
215 likely biased, lower ranking based on the *WS IF*.

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Table 1
Twenty Most Cited *Sports Biomechanics* Articles in Major Bibliometric Databases

Google Scholar 2002-2016

Author(s)	Title	Vol:Page	C	CPY
Bartlett et al.	Is movement variability important . . .	6:224	295	26.8
Fleisig et al.	Variability in baseball pitching . . .	8:10	131	14.6
Wilson et al.	Coordination variability and skill . . .	7:2	140	14.0
Butler et al.	Biomechanical analysis of the different . . .	9:4	92	11.5
Fleisig et al.	Kinematics used by world-class . . .	2:51	170	11.3
Shan & Westerhoff	Full-body kinematic characteristics . . .	4:59	129	9.9
Knudson	Significant and meaningful effects . . .	8:96	87	9.7
Cronin et al.	Effects of weighted vests and sled . . .	7:160	97	9.6
Portus et al.	Technique factors related to . . .	3:263	130	9.3
Michael et al.	Determinants of kayak paddling . . .	8:167	79	8.8
Bixler et al.	The accuracy of computational . . .	6:81	92	8.4
Prassas et al.	Biomechanical research in artistic . . .	5:261	99	8.3
Comyns et al.	Identifying the optimal resistive . . .	6:59	87	7.9
Nilsson et al.	Effects of speed on temporal patterns . . .	3:85	99	7.1
Giatsis et al.	Biomechanical differences in elite . . .	3:145	94	6.7
Stefanyshyn & Fusco	Effect of skill decomposition on . . .	9:296	92	6.6
Blanksby et al.	Biomechanical analysis of the grab . . .	1:11	105	6.6
Escamilla et al.	Kinematics and Kinetics comparison . . .	1:213	104	6.5
Chalmers	Strength training: Re-examination . . .	3:159	65	4.6
Elliott et al.	The RowPerfect ergometer: A training . . .	1:123	82	5.1
<i>M</i>			114.6	9.7
<i>M_e</i>			97.5	8.6
<i>SD</i>			48.4	4.7
<i>Skew</i>			3.0	2.7

Scopus 2002-2016

Bartlett et al.	Is movement variability important . . .	6:224	161	14.6
Wilson et al.	Coordination variability and skill . . .	7:2	81	8.1
Fleisig et al.	Variability in baseball pitching . . .	8:10	68	7.6
Knudson	Significant and meaningful effects . . .	8:96	56	6.2
Fleisig et al.	Kinematics used by world-class . . .	2:51	93	6.2
Portus et al.	Technique factors related to . . .	3:263	73	5.3
Shan & Westerhoff	Full-body kinematic characteristics . . .	4:59	68	5.2
Debraux et al.	Aerodynamic drag in cycling . . .	10:197	35	5.0
Chalmers	Strength training: Re-examination . . .	3:159	65	4.6
Bixler et al.	The accuracy of computational . . .	6:81	50	4.6
Dona et al.	Application of functional principal . . .	8:284	39	4.3
Cronin et al.	Effects of weighted vests and sled . . .	7:160	43	4.3
Stefanyshyn & Fusco	Increased shoe bending stiffness . . .	9:55	54	3.9
Nilsson et al.	Effects of speed on temporal patterns . . .	3:85	53	3.8
Candotti et al.	Effective force and economy of . . .	6:246	41	3.7
Escamilla et al.	Kinematics and Kinetics comparison . . .	1:213	52	3.3
Takagi et al.	Differences in stroke phases, arm-leg . . .	3:15	42	3.0

405	Giatsis et al.	Biomechanical differences in elite . . .	3:145	42	3.0
406	Elliott et al.	The RowPerfect ergometer: A training . . .	1:123	45	2.8
407	Stone et al.	Training principles: Evaluation of modes . . .	1:79	36	2.3
408	<hr/>				
409	<i>M</i>			59.9	5.1
410	<i>M_e</i>			52.5	4.4
411	SD			28.6	2.7
412	Skew			2.5	2.7
413	<i>Web of Science</i> 2006-2016				

414	Bartlett et al.	Is movement variability important . . .	6:224	148	13.5
415	Fleisig et al.	Variability in baseball pitching . . .	8:10	67	7.4
416	Preatoni et al.	Movement variability and skills . . .	12:69	31	6.2
417	Wilson et al.	Coordination variability and skill . . .	7:2	59	5.9
418	Sinclair et al.	Three-dimensional kinematic . . .	12:272	29	5.8
419	Knudson	Significant and meaningful effects . . .	8:96	49	5.4
420	Butler et al.	Biomechanical analysis of the . . .	9:4	35	4.4
421	Bixler et al.	The accuracy of computational . . .	6:81	46	4.2
422	Debraux et al.	Aerodynamic drag in cycling . . .	10:197	27	3.9
423	Cronin et al.	Effects of weighted vests and sled . . .	7:160	38	3.8
424	Dona et al.	Application of functional principal . . .	8:284	34	3.8
425	Reid et al.	Effect of skill decomposition on . . .	9:296	29	3.6
426	Charnock et al.	Adductor longus mechanics during . . .	8:223	31	3.4
427	Bradshaw et al.	Biological movement variability . . .	6:246	34	3.1
428	Comyns et al.	Identifying the optimal resistive . . .	6:59	34	3.1
429	Ball	Biomechanical considerations of . . .	7:10	30	3.0
430	Wagner & Mueller	The effects of differential and . . .	7:54	30	3.0
431	Prassas et al.	Biomechanical research in artistic . . .	5:261	35	2.9
432	Candotti et al.	Effective force and economy of . . .	6:31	30	2.7
433	Orloff et al.	Ground reaction forces and kinematics . . .	7:238	27	2.7
434	<hr/>				
435	<i>M</i>			42.2	4.6
436	<i>M_e</i>			34.0	3.8
437	SD			27.1	2.5
438	Skew			3.5	2.7
439	<hr/>				

440 Note: Total indexed citations (C) listed by citation rate (citations per year: CPY) at the time of the
 441 study. *Web of Science* did not index *Sports Biomechanics* articles before 2006.