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Website Review

Assessing the Reliability and Transparency of ScholarGPS: A Website Review

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of scholarly content and digital research tools has led to an increasing dependence on bibliometric indicators and academic ranking systems. ScholarGPS, an emerging research analytics platform, claims to offer comprehensive rankings of scholars, institutions, and disciplines using proprietary algorithms and large-scale publication data. This article critically examines the reliability and transparency of ScholarGPS through a systematic website review enriched by a literature-based analysis of bibliometrics, ranking methodologies, and data governance. The review focuses on the platform's data sources, methodological clarity, algorithmic design, fractional authorship logic, and the degree of openness in its reporting. Findings indicate that while ScholarGPS offers broad coverage and uses modern scientometric constructs such as fractional h-index and self-citation normalisation, there are notable gaps in metadata disclosure, algorithmic weight specifications, and governance transparency. The article concludes with implications for researchers, institutions, and evaluators, offering recommendations for responsible use and future methodological improvements.

Keywords: Academic Ranking, H-index, Scopus, ScholarGPS, Web of Science, Website review.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of scholarly communication has resulted in an unprecedented growth in academic publications, citations, and research data. With this rise has come a parallel expansion of tools designed to measure research performance, ranging from basic citation counts to complex ranking systems. Platforms such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar Metrics, AD Scientific Index, and others now shape academic visibility, institutional identity, and career trajectories (Figure 1).

ScholarGPS is one of the most recent entrants into this ecosystem. Marketed as a next-generation scholar-ranking platform, it claims to assess more than 30 million scholars, 50,000 institutions, and hundreds of thousands of specialisations through an integrated metric system combining productivity, impact, and fractional authorship calculations. Given the increasing use of such platforms for hiring, promotions, and funding decisions, evaluating their reliability and transparency is essential.

This article critically reviews ScholarGPS from the perspective of bibliometric validity, methodological clarity, and transparency. It investigates whether the platform provides sufficient documentation, rigorous metrics, and unbiased data to support responsible use in academia (Figure 2).

OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The core objectives of this journal article are:

- To examine ScholarGPS's methodological transparency, including its ranking algorithms, data sources, and metric definitions.
- To assess the reliability of its metrics, especially productivity, citation impact, and the fractional h-index.
- To compare the platform's approach with established bibliometric theories and practices.
- To evaluate governance transparency, including ownership, data provenance, update frequency, and integrity mechanisms.
- To provide recommendations for users and developers based on the analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly evaluation has historically relied on peer review, but increasing publication volume has created a demand for scalable evaluation metrics. Bibliometrics, as introduced by has since evolved into advanced systems measuring productivity, citation

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impact, co-authorship networks, and institutional performance. Databases such as Scopus and Web of Science have become central to global academic ranking systems (Chaman, 2023).

Traditional indicators such as the h-index (Hagen 2010) and total citation counts are widely used but have well-documented limitations. They fail to account for discipline-specific citation behaviours, inflate credit in multi-author publications, and permit self-citation bias (Costas *et al.*, 2010). These limitations prompted the development of alternative metrics, such as fractional counting (Hoang, 2025) field-normalised indicators and composite indicators (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010).

Fractional authorship metrics distribute citation credit based on the number of authors, reducing distortions created by large collaborative works (Sab *et al.*, 2019). Recent studies argue that fractional indicators offer a more realistic measure of individual contribution. ScholarGPS's adoption of a fractional h-index aligns with this contemporary shift.

The debate on transparency has intensified with the rise of algorithm-driven academic evaluations. Critics argue that black-box metrics can introduce opacity, bias, and misinterpretation (Sab *et al.*, 2021). For a ranking system to be credible, its methodology must be publicly documented, reproducible, and subject to expert scrutiny. Many ranking platforms, such as Times Higher Education or QS Rankings, face criticism for a lack of detailed methodological disclosure. This context provides the framework for evaluating ScholarGPS.

METHODOLOGY OF REVIEW

This review adopts a qualitative website-content analysis approach:

The ScholarGPS website was examined for documentation, FAQs, ranking methodology, privacy policy, and profile claims. The public user interface was analysed for functional transparency. Claims were compared with bibliometric literature and established methodologies. External references, university announcements, press releases, and user mentions were evaluated to understand adoption. The analysis is interpretive and critical, focusing on transparency, reliability, and methodological soundness.

Platform Overview of ScholarGPS

ScholarGPS presents itself as a large-scale database offering: 30 million scholar profiles. 50,000 institutional profiles. 14 broad fields, 177 disciplines, and 350,000+ specialities. Composite rankings combining productivity, impact, and fractional authorship (Figure 3).

Key services include

Key services include public scholar and institution rankings, 'top-ranked scholars' lists, claim-and update profiles, speciallity-lebel rankings and limited dashboard visualisations in some sections.

ANALYSIS OF SCHOLARGPS METHODOLOGY

Core Metrics: Productivity, Impact, Fractional h-Index

ScholarGPS uses three major indicators:

Productivity - total number of publications.Impact - citations received.Fractional h-index - an adjusted version of the h-index using fractional counting.These three components are integrated using a geometric mean, which reduces the effect of extreme variations in any single variable. While the platform discloses the broad approach, exact formulas, weightages, and normalisation procedures are not fully provided.

Strengths of the Methodology

Fractional authorship reduces inflated credit from multi-author collaborations. Self-citation filtering prevents manipulation. Geometric mean avoids skewness and overemphasis of a single metric. The speciality-level ranking is a novel feature rarely offered in competing platforms.

Weaknesses/Concerns

Lack of complete mathematical disclosure limits replicability. Absence of detailed field-normalisation formulas. No clear information about database sources (e.g., Scopus, WoS, CrossRef). Frequency of data updates is unspecified. These weaknesses affect the transparency of the ranking system.

Reliability Assessment

Reliability refers to whether the metrics are accurate, consistent, and computationally valid.

Indicators Supporting Reliability

Large dataset coverage increases representativeness. Fractional counting aligns with modern bibliometrics. Self-citation control enhances accuracy. Manual profile claiming helps correct misattributions.

Indicators Undermining Reliability

Without clarity on data sources, coverage bias is possible (regional, disciplinary, language related). No published audit or external peer evaluation of methodology. Unknown update frequency may lead to outdated or incorrect rankings. Lack of API/interface for independent verification reduces reliability.

TRANSPARENCY ASSESSMENT

Transparency is crucial for credibility in academic evaluation systems.

Strengths

Public documentation of basic methodology. Explicit acknowledgment of fractional authorship and citation filtering. Allows users to claim and edit profiles.

Gaps

No full disclosure of algorithmic formulas and field normalisation factors. Limited clarity on ownership, research team background, or advisory board. Incomplete information on data sources and integration pipelines. Website metadata and domain information show minimal organisational details. These transparency gaps reduce trust and hinder external validation.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER SYSTEMS

ScholarGPS vs Google Scholar Metrics

Google Scholar provides robust coverage but lacks field normalisation and fractional metrics. ScholarGPS attempts disciplinary categorisation and fractional credit as a methodological improvement. However, Google Scholar is more transparent about data origins (Google indexing).

ScholarGPS vs Scopus/Web of Science

Scopus and WoS have strict quality controls but limited coverage compared to Google Scholar. ScholarGPS coverage is unclear; thus, comparability is uncertain. WoS and Scopus provide explicit methodological documentation; ScholarGPS less so.

ScholarGPS vs AD Scientific Index

ADScientific Index uses D-index (Google Scholar h-index) but lacks fractional metrics. ScholarGPS's fractional approach is more aligned with recent research. AD Index is also criticised for opacity; both share similar concerns.

Adoption and Real-World Impact

ScholarGPS has gained visibility through: University announcements highlighting faculty rankings. Researcher self-promotions on personal pages. Press releases presenting it as a new evaluation platform. However, its adoption is not yet comparable to Scopus or Web of Science.

Ethical Concerns and Responsible Use

Reliance on opaque rankings can impact academic careers. Scholars advise: Using metrics as supportive indicators, not decision-makers. Avoiding single-platform dependency. Encouraging methodological transparency to avoid bias. Responsible use is essential in tenure, funding, or promotion decisions.

Recommendations for ScholarGPS

Publish a technical whitepaper detailing formulae and algorithms. Disclose data sources explicitly. Provide yearly update logs. Establish advisory committees of bibliometric experts. Enable transparency dashboards or open APIs.

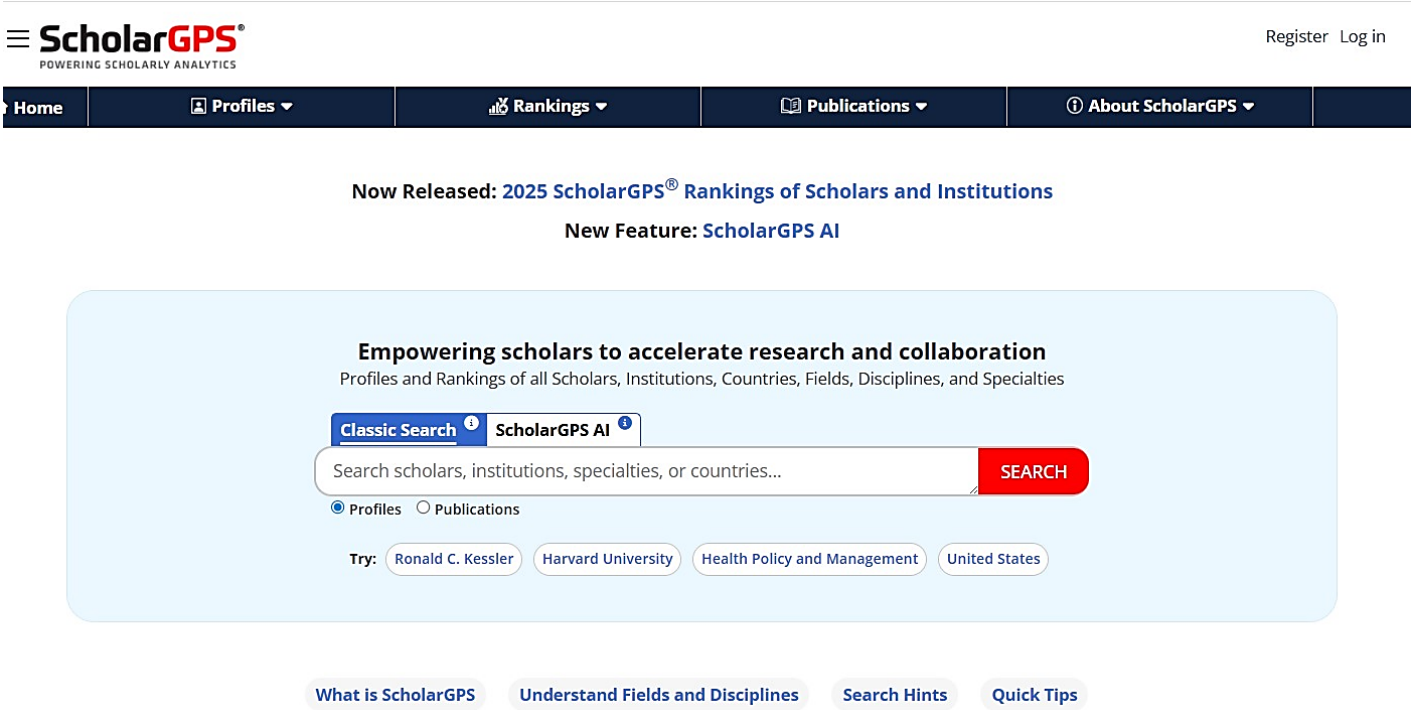

Figure 1: ScholarGPS Main page.

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Affiliation
Kuvempu University, Shankaraghattta, Bhadravathi Taluk, Shimoga, India

Affiliation History
View

Field
Social Sciences

Discipline
Information Sciences

Top Specialties
COVID-19, Social Media

Metrics Summary

Publications	Predicted Citations	Predicted h-index
17	33	3

Ranking
View

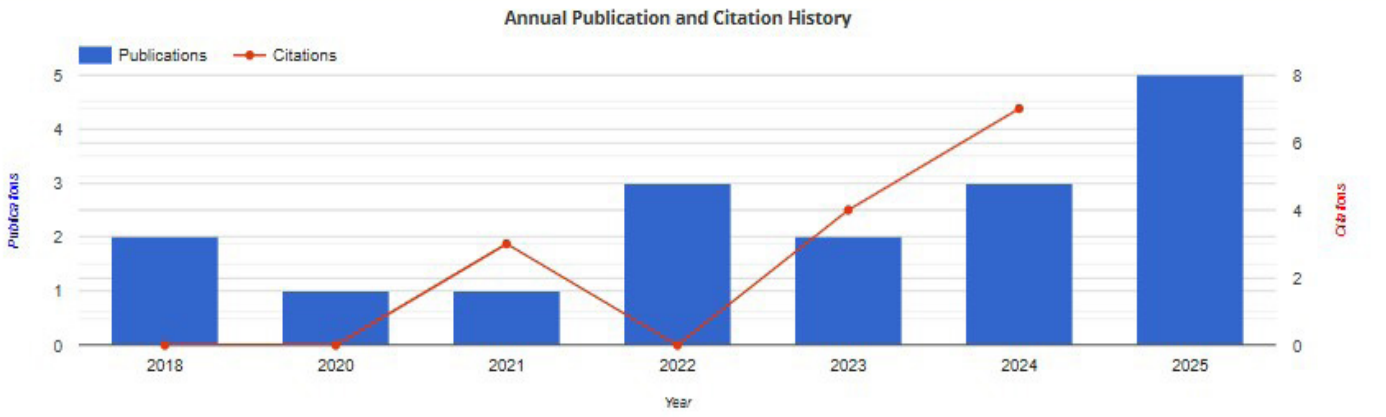

Figure 2: Author Profile index.

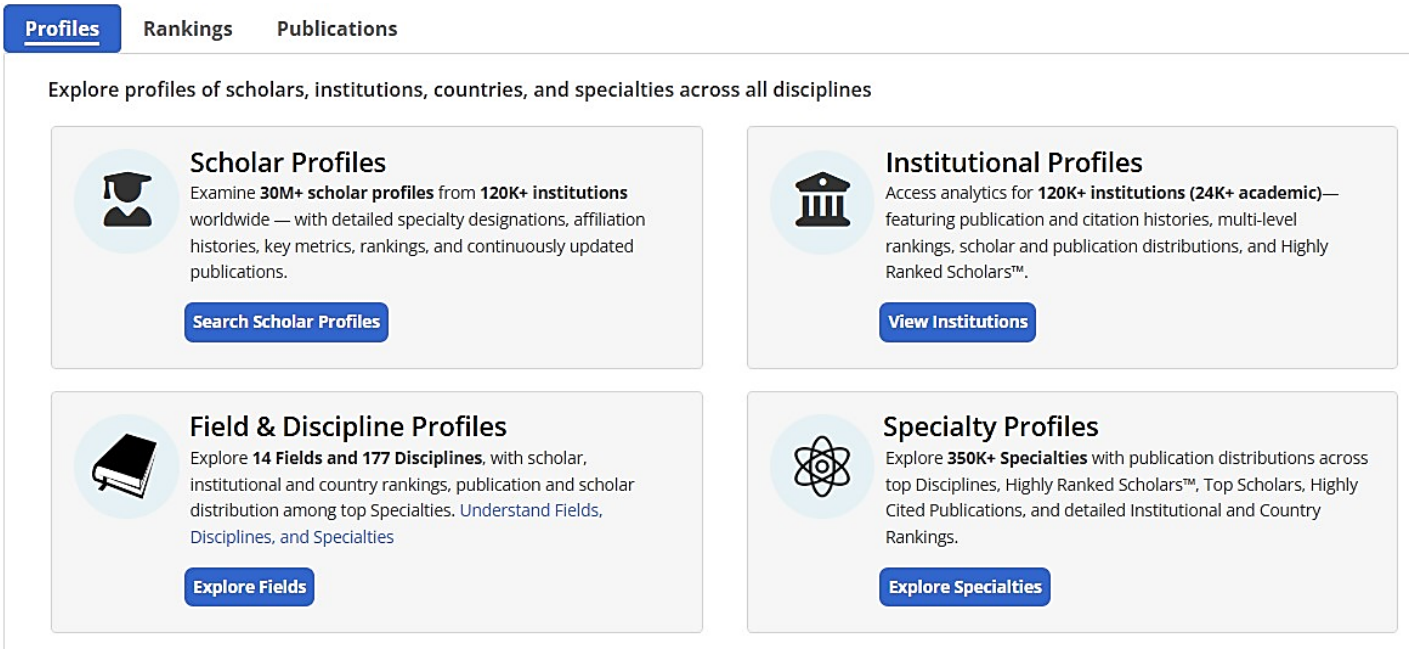

Figure 3: Profile Ranking Index.

For Researchers and Institutions

Treat ScholarGPS as one metric among many. Validate data through cross-checking. Encourage scholars to update profiles manually. Avoid high-stakes decisions based solely on rankings.

CONCLUSION

ScholarGPS presents an innovative, modern approach to scholarly ranking, particularly through its use of fractional h-index and extensive speciality classifications. Its ambition to map global scholarly output and provide multi-level rankings is commendable. However, the platform must enhance its transparency, methodological documentation, and data-source clarity to build wider academic trust. Until such improvements occur, users should interpret ScholarGPS rankings cautiously, using them as complementary metrics rather than authoritative assessment tools.

ABBREVIATIONS

WoS: Web of Science; **AD Scientific Index:** Alper-Doger Scientific Index; **D-Index:** Dissimilarity Index.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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