

Review of: "Measuring researchers' success more fairly: going beyond the H-index"

Nuno Crespo¹

¹ ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The paper deals with an interesting and important topic. In fact, to get a fair evaluation in science is a critical issue.

I think we all agree that current measures could/should be improved in several dimensions. This paper is a contribution to this goal, and therefore it deserves recognition.

Despite the overall merit of the proposal (above all, its simplicity and the aim to solve some limitations of the h-index), the paper has serious shortcomings that should be addressed.

From my point of view, the following aspects must be considered in a future version of the paper:

1. The h-index is assumed as the "current system" of evaluation. I agree that this metric is the most influential one, but I think we are far from a consensus regarding the use of the h-index as a standard metric. On the contrary, there is a wide recognition about the shortcomings of this measure and a strong resistance on its generalized use.
2. The paper does not include any reference to the many (perhaps too much) suggestions already advanced to minimize the limitations of the h-index. This idea is no more than an additional suggestion among many, many others. I really feel the lack of at least some of the most important references on this regard.
3. In my opinion, if we want to propose a new metric aiming to achieve some degree of acceptance, a necessary condition is that the score gives some clear interpretation. This is one of the merits of the h-index, but does not occur with this proposal.
4. There are many co-authorship weighting schemes already discussed in the literature, far beyond those emphasizing the importance of the first or the last author. These schemes should be discussed and the methods should be flexible enough to accommodate the use of alternative schemes.
5. I have a very critical position regarding the use of the IF as a determinant of the scientific performance of the author. The unit of analysis should be, in my opinion, the paper itself instead of other papers published in the same journal.
6. The lack of consideration of the order of the author in the list of authors is not a shortcoming of the h-index, it is a characteristic of almost all the proposals in this area.
7. Self-citations are, in fact, a critical problem. This deserves attention. But I'm not sure that the best solution is to exclude

self-citations. Is this procedure fairer? There are some possible non-extreme solutions (i.e, full account or exclusion), and I believe that this is the correct way to follow.

From a more positive point of view, I would like to highlight a fact that is not mentioned by the author but is a merit of the study. One of the most important (but less mentioned) limitations of the h-index is its low granularity, which means that it produces many ties, namely in the inferior part of the distribution. The proposal advanced here solves that problem.