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

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This is a rather short paper on the Hirsch-Index, with a recommendation for improvement. The paper takes the form of a discussion, i.e. it does not have a method, nor is it embedded in a theoretical background. All observations are valid, as far as I can see, and many more may be added. I would have liked to see a discussion of the relevance of the size of a field, for instance, as we seem to take for granted that the more is published in a given field, the more relevant it is for society (which perhaps is true, but then deserves discussion). I would also have liked to see a discussion of the extremes - such as papers being authored by more than 5000 colleagues - and the implications. For instance, if such a paper was cited 100 times (likely with 5000 researchers), it will mean that half a million citations are added to individual citation counts.

I also think that there is complexity in regard to some issues, such as the issue of first author. It is not rare for alphabetical authorship decisions to be made (for instance in the case of shared authorship), which will affect the score of those with A and B or C in their names - probably with a rapidly declining likelihood of being first author after reaching a specific point in the alphabet. Assigning the same score to all authors, on the other hand, may be very problematic in cases where most of a paper has been written by one author (even though the list of authors is long).

Perhaps an important framing question is why bibliometric assessments have gained such importance. Why exactly do scientists have to be ranked? Isn't science about knowledge generation, rather than the scientists? It is worth remembering that assessments are imposed, and driven by the publishers, who see this as another business model. I do not concur with the notion that we need assessments for grant assessments, where they may actually disfavor younger and more innovative colleagues. It would also be easy to reward much published colleagues with a "annual return on investment", i.e. to allocate a share of the budgets for research to those who publish in leading journals. Not last, there is evidence that the present system is already causing manipulation. If there is one thing we cannot have, it is scientists working for their own advancement rather than science itself.

The present paper makes important observations, it would benefit from an embedding in context, and a method: how do others think about bibliometrics, and what are their suggestions to deal with this issue?