Journal Names: Quantity *versus* Quality

David E. Giles

Department of Economics
University of Victoria, CANADA

Revised, November 2025

Abstract

We consider the relationship between the rankings and the title length of 555 economics journals. We find that there is a significant association between these two metrics as well as between the title length and the citations index that determines the rankings. Short journal titles are associated with high citation levels.

1.   Introduction

"Less is More" - Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Some of the most influential academic journals have very short titles – for example, *Science*, *Nature*, *Physica, Biometrika*, *Geology*, *Circulation*, *Polyhedron*, *Endoscopy*, *Neuron*, and *Econometrica*. What, if anything, should we conclude from this? Schreuder and Oosterveld (2008) investigated the relationship between the rankings of 6,033 journals in a wide range of scientific disciplines, and the length of those journals' titles. For their sample as a whole, and for journals in only five of the disciplinary groupings that they considered, these authors found a significant negative correlation between the journals' impact factors and the number of characters in their title. The converse result was obtained for the "Pediatrics" and "Urology and Nephrology" fields. The importance of analyzing such data from different disciplines separately is underscored by the following observations of Althouse *et al*. (2009): in 2006 the average (highest) impact factor for economics journals was 0.8 (4.7), compared with 4.8 (47.4) in molecular and cell biology.

Bramoullé and Ductor (2022) established a strong negative correlation between the length of the title of an economics *article* and its scientific quality. Subotic and Mukherjee (2014) reported similar results for papers in certain psychology journals. In this note we show that there is a significant negative relationship between the length of economics *journals*' titles and their perceived quality by the profession.[1] This quality is measured in terms of a citations index that is described in the next section. This leads us to offer some light- hearted suggestions for publishers, editors and budding authors in this discipline.

2.   Analysis of economics journals

The rankings of 555 economics journals are provided in Table 2 of Mixon and Upadhyaya (2022), and are based on Google Scholar citations per article for the period 2001 to 2015 inclusive. The top-ranked journal is *American Economic Review* (rank = 1, citations index = 100). The latter index has minimum, mean, and median sample values of 0.01, 5.92, and 3.32. The distribution of its values has skewness and kurtosis coefficients of 5.29 and 43.15 respectively.

---

[1] This note is a re-written version of a now superceded and unpublished working paper, Giles (2011), that was based on an earlier set of data.

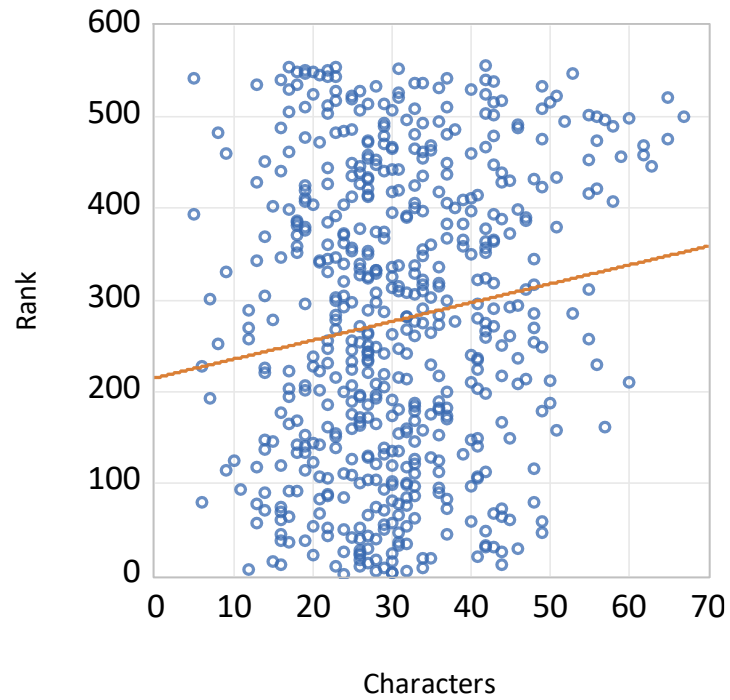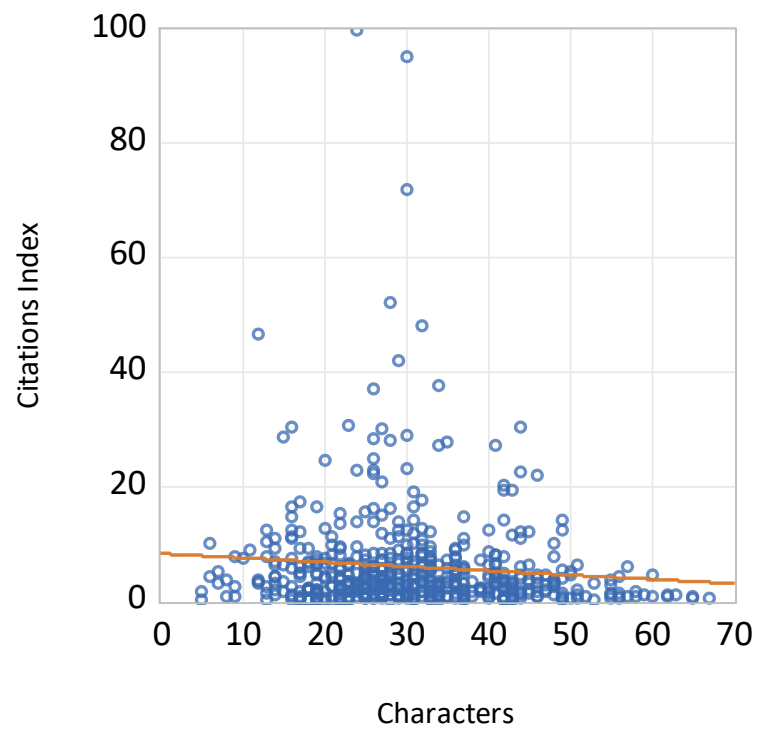**Figure 1. Journal rank *vs*. title length (with OLS line)**

Figure 2. Citations index *vs*. title length (with OLS line)

Our measure of a journal's title length[2] is the number of characters (including embedded blanks). In our sample, title lengths range from 5 characters (for the journals, *Games*, and *Mises*: rankings = 394, and 542) to 68 characters (for the journal[3], *Homo Oeconomicus – Journal of Behavioral and Institutional Economics*: ranking = 499). The distribution of the title lengths has a mean, median and mode of 30.89, 30 and 27 characters respectively; and its skewness and kurtosis coefficients are 0 46 and 3.09. Figures 1 and 2 provide scatter-plots of journal rank *vs*. title length, and citations index *vs*. title length respectively.

One might anticipate that well-established journals may be ranked better in terms of citations than "young" journals, *ceteris paribus*. To allow for this we have assembled the data for the first year of publication of each journal in the sample. The older the journal, the smaller is the value of this first year. So, a negative (positive) relationship between this date and the citations index (rank) is anticipated. Accordingly, we have estimated multiple regression models of the form, $y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 c_i + \beta_2 d_i + \varepsilon_i$, where *y* is either "rank" or "citations index", *c* is the number of characters in the journal's title, and *d* is the date (year) that the journal was first published. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation has been used for each dependent variable. However, given the outliers in Figure 2, when the citations index is the dependent variable we focus on the more appropriate MM robust estimator. This is a combination of the M estimator of Huber (1964), and the S estimator of Rousseeuw and Yohai (1984). The results, obtained using the EViews package (HIS Global, 2025), appear in Table 1.

Table 1. Regression results

	y = "Rank"	y = "Citations Index"	
	OLS	OLS	MM
β_0 (s.e.)	-2904.9660 (574.74)*	218.2470 (66.42)*	50.4447 (10.47)*
β_1 (s.e.)	1.3970 (0.57)*	-0.0294 (0.03)	-0.0307 (0.01)*
β_2 (s.e.)	1.5826 (0.29)*	-0.1066 (0.03)*	-0.0232 (0.01)*
R^2	0.0847	0.0934	n.a.
R^2_w	n.a	n.a.	0.0700
F (p-val.)	25.5515 (0.00)	28.4268 (0.00)	n.a.

Note: "s. e." denotes the Huber-White-Hinkley robust standard error for OLS; and the Huber Type I robust standard error for MM estimation. R^2_w is the robust weighted R^2. * denotes significant at the 1% significance level.

---

[2] The process of character counting was simplified by using the web-based tool accessed at http://allworldphone.com/count-words-characters.htm.

[3] This journal title, and two others, were mis-spelt by one character by Mixon and Upadhyaya (2020).

The insignificant (although negative) OLS result when the citations index is the dependent variable can be discarded in favour of the significant MM estimation result. Recalling that a low "rank" number is associated with a high citations index value, and with a high measure of journal impact, we see that the results in Table 1 indicate a significant negative relationship between the length of a journal's title and its impact. This is consistent with the Spearman's rank-correlation and Kendall's tau statistics values of -0.1111 ($p = 0.0088$) and -0.0764 ($p = 0.0079$) for the "characters" and "citations index" data, where "p" is the p-value for the test that the rank-correlation is zero.

3. Some thought-provoking conclusions

The results in the last section may attract the interest of authors and editors seeking to maximize their citations, and departments wishing to raise their profile in the profession and their funding base. They may also sound alarm bells in the corridors of publishing houses as they assess proposals for new economics journals. The titles, *Economics* and *Economies* are no longer available, having been cunningly adopted in 2006 and 2013 as open-access, open-assessment e-journals. The title, *Economica,* has been spoken for since 1921, but *Econ* is still available. With only four characters in the title, this one is just asking to be snapped up!

In 2009 the American Economic Association laid claim to the titles *Macroeconomics* and *Microeconomics*, albeit with an "*American Economic Journal*" prefix that they may wish to re-think. The publishers of the journal, *SERIEs: Journal of the Spanish Economic Association*, which was launched in 2010, may wish to consider the merits of dropping the last six words of its title.

Finally, and in the tradition of concluding academic papers with some suggestions for future research, one obvious extension of this paper is to undertake a similar analysis of the numbers of co-authors and page lengths, and citation rates for economics articles. The author does not claim any precedence regarding this suggestion.

4. References

Althouse, B. M., J. D. West, C. T. Bergstrom and T. Bergstrom (2009) "Differences in impact factors across fields and over time" *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 60, 27-34.

Bramoullé, Y. and L. Ductor (2018) "Title length" *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 150, 311-324.

Giles, D. E. (2011) "Quantity versus Quality: What's in a (Journal) Name?" Working Paper EWP 1103, Department of Economics, University of Victoria.

Huber, P. J. (1964) "Robust estimation of a location parameter" *Annals of Mathematical Statistics* 35, 73-101.

IHS Global (2025) *EViews 14*, IHS Global: Irvine, CA.

Kalaitzidakis, P., T. Stengos and T. P. Mamuneas (2003) "Academic journals and institutions in Economics" *Journal of the European Economic Association* 1, 1346-1366.

Mixon, F. G. and K. P. Upadhyaya (2022) "Top to bottom: An expanded ranking of economics journals" *Applied Economics Letters* 29, 226-237.

Rousseeuw, P. and V. Yohai (1984) "Robust regression by means of S-estimators" in J. Franke, W. Härdle, and D. Martin (eds), *Robust and Nonlinear Time Series Analysis*, Springer, New York, 256-272.

Schreuder, M. F. and M. J. S. Oosterveld (2008) "Who ever said size doesn't matter? The association between journal title length and impact factor" *NDT Plus* 2, 126-127.

Subotic, S. and B. Mukherjee (2014) "Short and amusing: The relationship between title characteristics, downloads, and citations in psychology articles" *Journal of Information Science* 40, 115-124.