

Editorial

Towards a More Impactful *recoletos* Journal: Addressing Contemporary Challenges in Scientific Research

Don Eliseo Lucero-Prisno III^{1*} , MBN Kouwenhoven² , and Jessica Magallon-Avenido³ 

¹ Department of Global Health and Development, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, United Kingdom
don-eliseo.lucero-prisno@lshtm.ac.uk

² Department of Physics, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Suzhou, China
t.kouwenhoven@xjtlu.edu.cn

³ Graduate School of Business and Management, University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cebu City, Philippines
jessica.avenido@apps.usjr.edu.ph

Landscape of Global Research

The global scientific landscape is undergoing significant transformation and is facing major challenges due to developments across various scientific fields. The shaping and evolution of today's sciencescape is a dynamic, inherently complex process, influenced not only by internal scientific progress but also by powerful external forces such as geopolitical dynamics, economic inequality, scientific nationalism and other forces (Morgan & Kassen, 2023).

In spite of the rapid advancements in science and the increasing volume of scientific publications worldwide, the research community continues to grapple with numerous challenges. For instance, commercialization and corporatization have altered the way scientific publishing operates (Buranyi, 2022). Metrics such as publication counts, often used in university rankings, influence the behavior of researchers and institutions— sometimes encouraging strategic or even manipulative practices (van der Aalst et al., 2023). Issues such as publication bias, paywalls, and the pressure to publish in high-impact journals can distort research priorities and methods (Button et al., 2016). In fact, intense competition for research funding has led institutions to adopt more protective and less collaborative approaches. This competitive atmosphere extends to data sharing and intellectual property rights, further hampering scientific cooperation.

Likewise, citation counts remain the dominant metric for assessing research impact, despite widespread acknowledgment that they are an imperfect measure (Williams, 2022). Meanwhile, the rise of artificial intelligence presents new complexities, reshaping nearly every aspect of the research process—from conceptualization to publication—and leaving the scientific community navigating uncharted territory (Gendron et al., 2021).

In spite of the positive developments in the global research landscape, conducting research remains particularly challenging in many parts of the developing world—including the Philippines, where this journal is based. Researchers in these contexts often work under significant constraints that hinder both the quality and the impact of their work (Durante et al., 2023). These challenges contribute to the broader issue of research inequality and inequity, marking a clear division between countries with great resources and those with limited support, and ultimately reinforcing global disparities in research output and influence.

Key challenges include limited financial resources, inadequate research infrastructure, a shortage of mentorship and training opportunities, and bureaucratic hurdles—particularly in areas such as ethics approval, funding processes, and oversight (Olatunji et al., 2023). Difficulties in establishing effective collaborations and in disseminating research further compound these issues. Generally, the reasons for these challenges may be attributed to the overall issues such as systemic neglect of research as a national priority, fragmented governance structures, and the insufficient provision of clear policies for sustainable academic development. In many low- and middle-income areas, research is often seen as secondary to economic or political goals, leading to inappropriate allocation of resources and lacking of support. This issue worsens due to the poor coordination among institutions, limited access to international networks, and inadequate incentives for local knowledge production. These underlying factors create an environment where research is undervalued, underfunded, and less integrated in national development strategies.

Revisiting Scientific Journals

One of the key players in the dynamic scientific community is the scientific journal. Journals have different pragmatic affordances in the cultivation and propagation of knowledge. As a matter of fact, journals serve as essential platforms where researchers present their findings. They play a pivotal role in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge across the global research landscape. Publishing scientific journals remains the primary medium for researchers to share their work, enabling others to build upon it and contributing to a cumulative documentation of scientific progress.

In the same vein, scientific journals provide a structured space for the peer review of manuscripts. Peer review is the critical process by which experts in the same field evaluate the submitted research to ensure its quality, validity, and relevance. This process has evolved over time to include various models—such as single-blind, double-blind, triple-blind, group review, and public peer review—each with its own approach to maintain objectivity and transparency. Peer review functions as a quality control system, helping to identify errors to prevent the spread of misinformation and to uphold the credibility of the scientific literature (Tennant & Ross-Hellauer, 2020). Through this system, journals help safeguard the reliability of information that various end users—academics, researchers, policymakers, and the general public—depend on.

As such, the peer review process is a fundamental mechanism that scientific journals must uphold. By doing so, journals maintain the integrity, transparency, and trustworthiness of research across disciplines. Consequently, editors and reviewers play a crucial role in this system, acting as gatekeepers who not only assess the scientific rigor of submissions but also their relevance and potential to address pressing societal challenges (Lucero-Prisno, 2022).

Needless to say, scientific journals play a crucial role in advancing science by facilitating knowledge dissemination, information sharing, and the promotion of scientific results. When researchers publish their findings, they make new information—particularly breakthrough discoveries and cutting-edge research—accessible not only to the scientific community, but also to the general public and other end users (Beck et al., 2019). Beyond sharing research results, journals also contribute to global scientific discourse by offering a platform for discussions, including the publication of thought pieces, commentaries, and other reflective or provocative essays.

As a result, the affordances and value of research have induced the utility of open science, paving the way for open-access publishing models. In fact, many journals now have adopted this mechanism to promote wider accessibility and availability of research articles. This shift fosters a more inclusive and an equitable global exchange of scientific ideas.

Additionally, the indexing of journals by organizations such as Scopus and Clarivate provides valuable tools for researchers, institutions, and policymakers to analyze scientific trends, to understand the current research landscape, and to develop strategic responses.

Scientific journals also serve as historical archives of scientific progress (Lucero-Prisno, 2022). They document the evolution of theories, the development and the application of technologies, and the methods or ways of analysing scientific challenges to address them over time. This archival function allows future

researchers to trace the origins of ideas, to replicate or revisit past studies, and to identify gaps in existing knowledge. Journals play a key role to ensure that ideas are properly attributed, giving recognition to original researchers—an essential aspect of academic credit and career advancement.

Moreover, journals actively shape the direction of scientific inquiry. By highlighting emerging trends, by dedicating special issues to urgent topics, and by offering visibility to ground breaking discoveries, journals influence research funding, policy development, and education. Indexing bodies, in turn, aggregate data that reflect the current state of scientific inquiry and provide insights into the dynamics of specific fields or phenomena.

Scaling Up the Impact of *recoletos* Journal

Launched in 2013, the *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal (RMRJ)* is an open-access, APC-free academic journal published by the University of San Jose–Recoletos in Cebu City, Philippines. Over the past 11 years, it has become a major platform for disseminating research findings to the academic community. RMRJ is indexed in several major databases, including the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and achieved a significant milestone in 2023 by being indexed in Scopus, which attests to the journal's adherence to high editorial standards.

In terms of performance, RMRJ cemented a CiteScore of 0.13 in 2023, which increased to 0.153 in 2024, and has been classified as a Q4 journal by Scimago for both years—an indicator of its growing recognition. The journal's Scopus h-index also increased from 4 in 2023 to 5 in 2025, reflecting the steady rise in citations and in research impact.

The journal's development has been shaped by the leadership of its founding Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Dr. Agnes C. Sequino (2013–2015) of the University of Negros Occidental–Recoletos, and her successor, Prof. Dr. Nilo T. Bugtai (2016–2024) of De La Salle University.

One of RMRJ's core strengths lies in its multidisciplinary nature, having published manuscripts from various fields in varying volumes over the years. Its highest output was recorded in 2014, and since then, citations have shown a steady upward trend—particularly in 2023 and 2024, when the journal also experienced a notable increase in international co-authorship. All articles published by RMRJ are citable, aligning with Scopus' standards, which typically include original research articles, review papers, and long-form documents (e.g., essays, commentaries, and perspectives) that are at least 1,500 words and include a methods section.

As a Scopus-indexed journal, RMRJ plays a critical role in advancing the scientific landscape of the Philippines. It contributes to addressing the country's slow research output, as revealed by Scopus data. The Philippines ranks 6th among ASEAN nations, contributing only 4% of the region's total Scopus publications—half of Vietnam's output, which ranks 5th. This statistic underscores the challenges in Philippine research and highlights both the need and opportunity for growth in science and innovation.

In response to emerging challenges, the journal is undergoing a rebranding and reinvigoration process. It will relaunch as *recoletos*, symbolizing a renewed, collective platform for the advancement of science and research; from the spirit of *recollecion*, of interiority, springs new frontiers and points of collaboration. Science, after all, is a global collaborative endeavor. As scientific inquiry evolves rapidly—with shifting methodologies, tools, and approaches—the journal, too, must adapt to remain relevant and responsive to the changing needs of researchers, institutions, and knowledge users.

This transformation aligns with the global trend toward strengthening independent journals, particularly those managed by universities and learned societies. In a landscape where scientific publishing is dominated by large commercial publishers with considerable influence, independent journals play a vital role in diversifying perspectives and rebalancing priorities in global science.

As a Philippine-based journal, *recoletos* will place special emphasis on supporting and publishing research from the Philippines. While it will maintain a strong international scope, a significant portion of its content will come from local scholars. This dual approach aims to increase the country's contribution to global scholarly output, to enhance the visibility of Philippine research, and ultimately to improve the nation's academic standing in the international community.

The *recoletos* journal envisions being indexed by Clarivate (Web of Science)—a prestigious indexing body known for producing the Impact Factor (IF), one of the most widely recognized metrics in academic publishing. While Scopus is highly respected for its broad scope, Clarivate is distinguished by its selectivity and strong emphasis on the natural sciences, making it the preferred choice for academic promotions in countries with high research productivity in those fields. Given RMRJ's publication of articles across diverse areas, including natural sciences, it aligns well with Clarivate's standards. Securing a Clarivate indexing is a primary goal for the journal within the next three years.

To make a more significant contribution to scientific literature and to both natural and social sciences, RMRJ thinks that increasing the journal's publication output is essential. While the current volume remains modest compared to other multidisciplinary journals, scaling up will improve visibility, readership, and influence. An increasing trend in the number of publications is targeted over the coming years. A higher publication volume will also boost the probability of publishing high-impact, citable papers, thereby raising both the journal's CiteScore and its future Impact Factor.

Globally, journals publish over 500 types of manuscripts, each serving a unique role in advancing scientific dialogue. Among these, thought papers—such as commentaries, perspectives, and essays—hold particular importance for sparking debate and reflection. These are indexed by both Scopus and Clarivate which have contributed meaningfully to metrics like Impact Factor and CiteScore. By broadening the range of accepted manuscript types, RMRJ can attract contributions from a more diverse pool of researchers, early-career scholars to seasoned experts.

Improving CiteScore and Impact Factor is crucial for elevating the journal's academic standing. These metrics often influence researchers' decisions regarding publication, as well as institutional recognition and funding opportunities. A realistic and strategic goal is to move from Q4 to Q3 in Scimago Journal Rankings. To support this, the journal must intensify promotion efforts. Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, SciVal and Academia.edu will be leveraged to increase visibility, engagement, and citations. Likewise, dedicated staff will be assigned to maintain these platforms to emphasize that publication is just the beginning—active promotion is necessary to maximize impact.

Another proven strategy used by top-tier journals is commissioning papers from recognized experts and prominent research institutions. These invited contributions often yield high citation rates due to their depth, credibility, and relevance. Hence, *recoletos* will adopt this approach to publish influential and high-quality papers that elevate its reputation and scholarly influence.

Although *recoletos* is based in the Philippines, it maintains a global outlook, especially with its inclusion in Scopus. To further expand its international reach, the journal will strengthen and diversify its Editorial Board by actively inviting members from prestigious global institutions. This revitalized board will reinforce the journal's multidisciplinary and international character, enhance content quality, and foster credibility across fields.

In tandem, the journal will encourage more international authorship by promoting submissions from diverse countries and by fostering joint authorships between researchers across borders. This strategy aligns with Scopus and Scimago metrics that value international collaboration and will contribute to the journal's global engagement and citation growth.

To further amplify scholarly contribution, *recoletos* will host special issues and thematic series, focusing on underrepresented regions with emerging scientific topics and global challenges. These collections are seen to attract attention and citations due to their relevance and scope. Complementing this, the journal will organize research training workshops to help scholars—especially early-career researchers to produce publishable and high-quality outputs that can contribute directly to the journal's content and academic impact.

With these initiatives, *recoletos* is entering a new phase of transformation. This revitalization is aimed at making the journal a more impactful and a responsive platform for scientific communication. As research continues to shape societal, economic, and technological development—particularly in the Global South, scientific journals like *recoletos* remain indispensable. They validate, preserve, and disseminate scientific knowledge, ensuring that research remains credible, relevant, and accessible.

By and large, the journal's evolution reflects the changing nature of science itself. While the essence of research remains constant, the methods, tools, and communication strategies are rapidly evolving. Hence, journals must keep pace with this transformation. The ongoing development of recoletos is essential for keeping it at the forefront of scholarly publishing as it continues to serve, to inform, and to inspire the global research community in the years to come.

References

- Beck, S., Mahdad, M., Beukel, K., & Poetz, M. (2019). The value of scientific knowledge dissemination for scientists—A value capture perspective. *Publications*, 7(3), 54. <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications7030054>
- Buranyi, S. (2022, April 20). Is the staggeringly profitable business of scientific publishing bad for science? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/jun/27/profitable-business-scientific-publishing-bad-for-science#:~:text=In%20recent%20years%2C%20the%20most,world%20we%20live%20in%20now.>
- Button, K. S., Bal, L., Clark, A., & Shipley, T. (2016). Preventing the ends from justifying the means: withholding results to address publication bias in peer-review. *BMC Psychology*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-016-0167-7>
- Durante, C. a. G., Reynoso, L. C., Lorenzo, L. C., Nunez, N. G., Calixtro, R., Jr, Juan, E. S., & Frani, J. J. (2023). Research Hesitancy in the Academe: a Multi-University study in the Philippines. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Applied Business and Education Research*, 4(5), 1442–1446. <https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.05.05>
- Gendron, Y., Andrew, J., & Cooper, C. (2021). The perils of artificial intelligence in academic publishing. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 87, 102411. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2021.102411>
- Lucero-Prisno, D. E. III. (2022). Public health challenges: A new scientific path and platform. *Public Health Challenges*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/puh2.5>
- Morgan, R., and Kassen, R. (2023). *Global science for global challenges: the landscape of international scientific collaboration* — *Frontiers Policy Labs*. *Frontiers Policy Labs*. Retrieved from <https://policylabs.frontiersin.org/content/landscape-of-international-scientific-collaboration>
- Olatunji, G., Emmanuel, K., Osaghae, O. W., Timilehin, I., Aderinto, N., & Abdulbasit, M. O. (2023). Enhancing clinical and translational research in Africa: a comprehensive exploration of challenges and opportunities for advancement. (2023c). *Journal of Clinical and Translational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.18053/jctres.09.202305.23-00079>
- Tennant, J. P., & Ross-Hellauer, T. (2020). The limitations to our understanding of peer review. *Research Integrity and Peer Review*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-020-00092-1>
- van der Aalst, W. M. P., Hinz, O., & Weinhardt, C. (2023). Ranking the Ranker: How to evaluate institutions, researchers, journals, and conferences? *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 65(6), 615–621. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12599-023-00836-5>
- Williams, K. (2022). What counts: Making sense of metrics of research value. *Science and Public Policy*, 49(3), 518–531. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scac004>