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ORIGINAL STUDY

# An Analysis of Political Science and International Relations Publications in Iraqi Governmental Universities (2020–2024): A Bibliometric Study

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## ABSTRACT

Assessing the research landscape of Iraqi public universities is crucial for national academic development, yet no comprehensive bibliometric analysis of its social science disciplines exists. Using a bibliometric approach, this study analyzes data from the Scopus database, to examine the research output in Political Science and International Relations from 15 Iraqi governmental universities; which have faculties of political sciences and/or international relations; during the period 2020–2024. The analysis reveals significant disparities in publication productivity and research impact among institutions. The University of Baghdad leads in publication volume, while institutions such as the University of Dohuk, University of Salahaddin, and University of Mosul, despite producing fewer publications, exhibit higher citation rates and field-weighted citation impact (FWCI). These findings suggest a centralization of publication quantity in Baghdad, alongside a generally low level of author productivity; publications per author. Additionally, the weak correlation between publication volume and citation impact indicates that higher number of publications does not necessarily equate to greater academic influence. These results provide an empirical basis for policymakers and academic leaders, suggesting that future strategies should prioritize fostering high-impact research at emerging centers of excellence rather than focusing narrowly on publication counts.

**Keywords:** Political science, International relations, Iraqi governmental, Bibliometric analysis, FWCI

## 1. Introduction

Political Science and International Relations (PS/IR) research provides essential frameworks for analyzing institutional resilience, governance, and the position of states within the global order [1, 2]. In Iraq, a country navigating post-conflict reconstruction, persistent federal disputes, and regional volatility, PS/IR scholarship assumes heightened significance [3, 4]. Iraqi Governmental universities, as key sites of knowledge production, play a pivotal role in shaping academic debates as well as informing public policy during this critical phase of political restructuring from 2020 to 2024

[5, 6]. Consequently, a methodical examination of the research performance of these institutions in political science and international relations is not only an appraisal of their academic dynamism but also a reflection of the intellectual capital being invested in addressing the most critical issues confronting the nation.

Bibliometric investigation, a quantitative approach to assessing scholarly publications, has become a pivotal methodology for assessing research trends, institutional accomplishments, and the influence of academic contributions. Through the investigation of metrics such as number of publications, citation counts, and FWCI, researchers, heads of scientific

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affairs departments at universities, deans of political sciences faculties and policymakers can acquire valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of a nation's research framework. Such analyses can identify principal universities, spotlight areas of research excellence, and diagnosing obstacles to the development of a robust research environment.

Despite the increasing global use of bibliometric techniques to evaluate academic disciplines, there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning Political Science and International Relations research in the Middle East, particularly in post-conflict nations like Iraq. Existing bibliometric studies in PS/IR tend to focus on high-output regions such as North America and Western Europe, often overlooking the research dynamics and institutional challenges in the Global South [7–10]. This study addresses this void by providing a region-specific analysis of PS/IR scholarship within Iraqi governmental universities, offering valuable insights into patterns of research productivity, impact, and institutional performance. The conclusions are intended to inform academics, university administrators, and policymakers working to elevate the quality and international visibility of Iraqi social science research.

## 2. Methods

A quantitative bibliometric methodology was adopted for this study to analyze the research output of Iraqi governmental universities in the domains of Political Science and International Relations. The data were sourced from the Scopus database, a premier and extensive abstract and citation repository of peer-reviewed academic literature. This research considers in the analysis only the peer-reviewed articles.

The data collection was restricted to the period from the start of 2020 to the end of 2024, to offer a current assessment of the research environment. The scope of the search was confined to publications associated with Iraqi governmental universities. The designated subject areas were “Political Science” and “International Relations,” as classified within the Scopus database. Both designated subject areas in Scopus are classified under Social Science (SOC). Therefore, Fig. 1 is created to presents Topics of the publications in Political Science and International Relations authored by faculty members at Iraqi governmental universities during the 2020–2024 period. Each bubble represents a Topic. The size of the bubble indicates the output of the entity in the Topic. The position of the bubble is based upon the ASJC categories of the journals in which the Scholarly Output is published. The most topics in Political Science and International

Relations authored by faculty members at Iraqi governmental universities have been studied: Political Identity and State Formation in Iraq, Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability Mechanisms, Dynamics of Political Violence and Terrorist Groups, Kurdistan's Political Dynamics and Regional Relations, Kurdish Political Dynamics and Independence Aspirations, Media Influence and Propaganda of ISIS, Turkey's Evolving Role in Middle Eastern Foreign Policy, Economic Sanctions and Their Global Implications, Political Violence and Resource Dynamics in Conflicts, IMF's Influence on Global Economic Policies, Sovereignty and Recognition in Contested Territories, Cyber Operations and International Law Dynamics, Geopolitical Dynamics and Security in Iran, Radicalization and Violent Extremism Dynamics, Gender Dynamics in Peace and Security Frameworks, Sectarianism and Identity Politics in the Middle East, Islamist Movements and Political Dynamics in MENA, Paradiplomacy and Subnational Engagement in Global Affairs, BRICS and Multilateral Development Bank Dynamics, International Criminal Justice and Its Complexities, Sexual Violence and Male Victimization in Conflict, Narratives of Experience in International Relations, Climate Change and Its Impact on Global Security, Cyber Terrorism Threats to Critical Infrastructure, Human Security and Securitization in Global Contexts, Mediation Strategies in International Conflict Resolution, Democracy and Economic Growth Interrelationship, and etc.

The collected data were then utilized to create a series of visual representations to aid in the analysis and interpretation of the results. These visualizations encompassed bar charts to display scholarly output by institution (Fig. 2) and region (Fig. 3), citations per publication (Fig. 4), FWCI (Fig. 5), and productivity (Fig. 6). A radar chart was developed for a standardized comparison of the leading institutions across various metrics as shown in Fig. 7. Furthermore, a correlation matrix (Fig. 8) was produced to investigate the statistical relationships between the different publication metrics. The data analysis and visualization were carried out using statistical software to guarantee precision and lucidity in the presentation of the findings.

## 3. Results

The investigation of scholarly publications from Iraqi governmental universities in Political Science and International Relations between 2020 and 2024 highlights notable differences in research productivity and influence among institutions based on the metrics listed in Table 1.

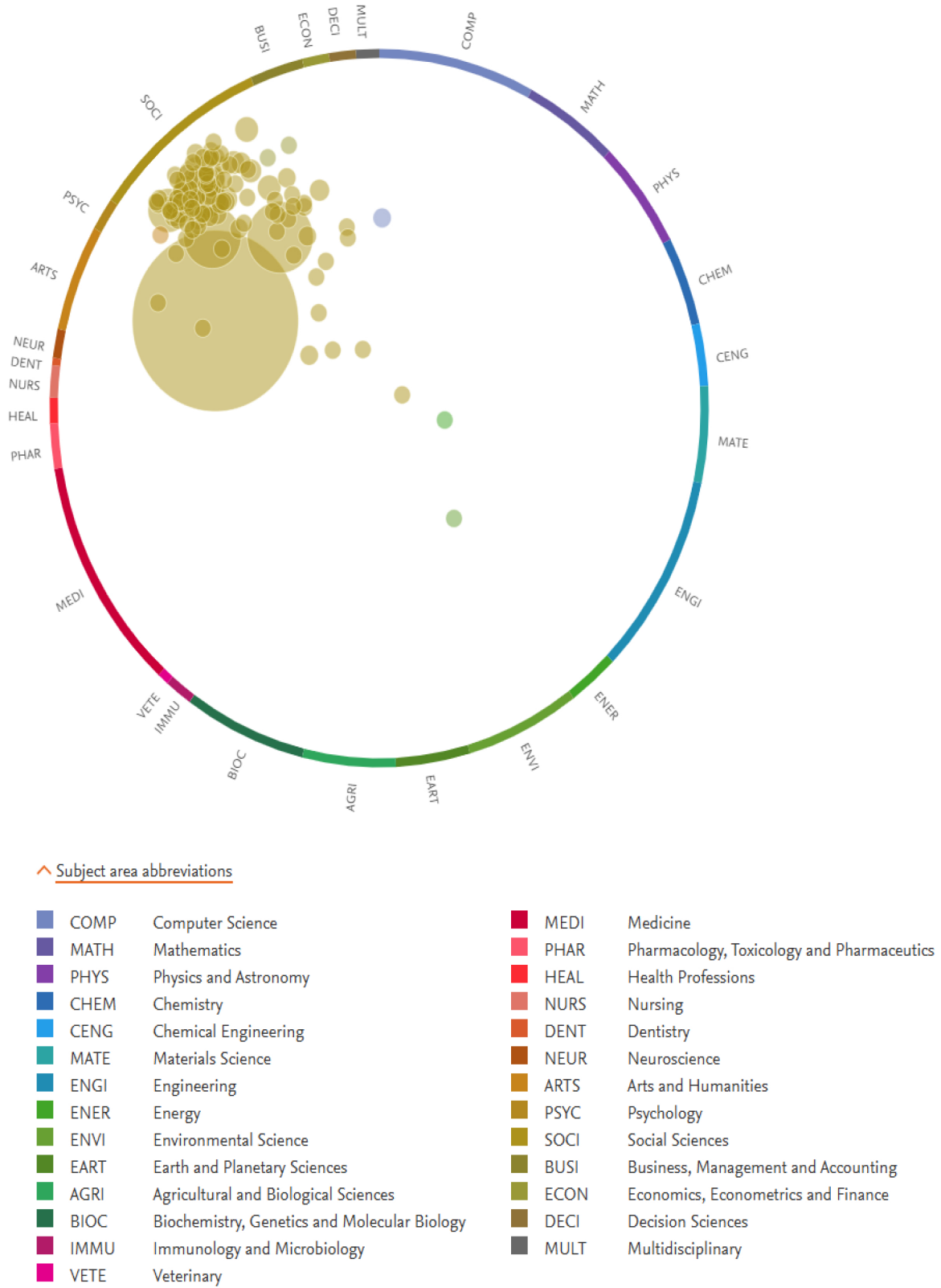
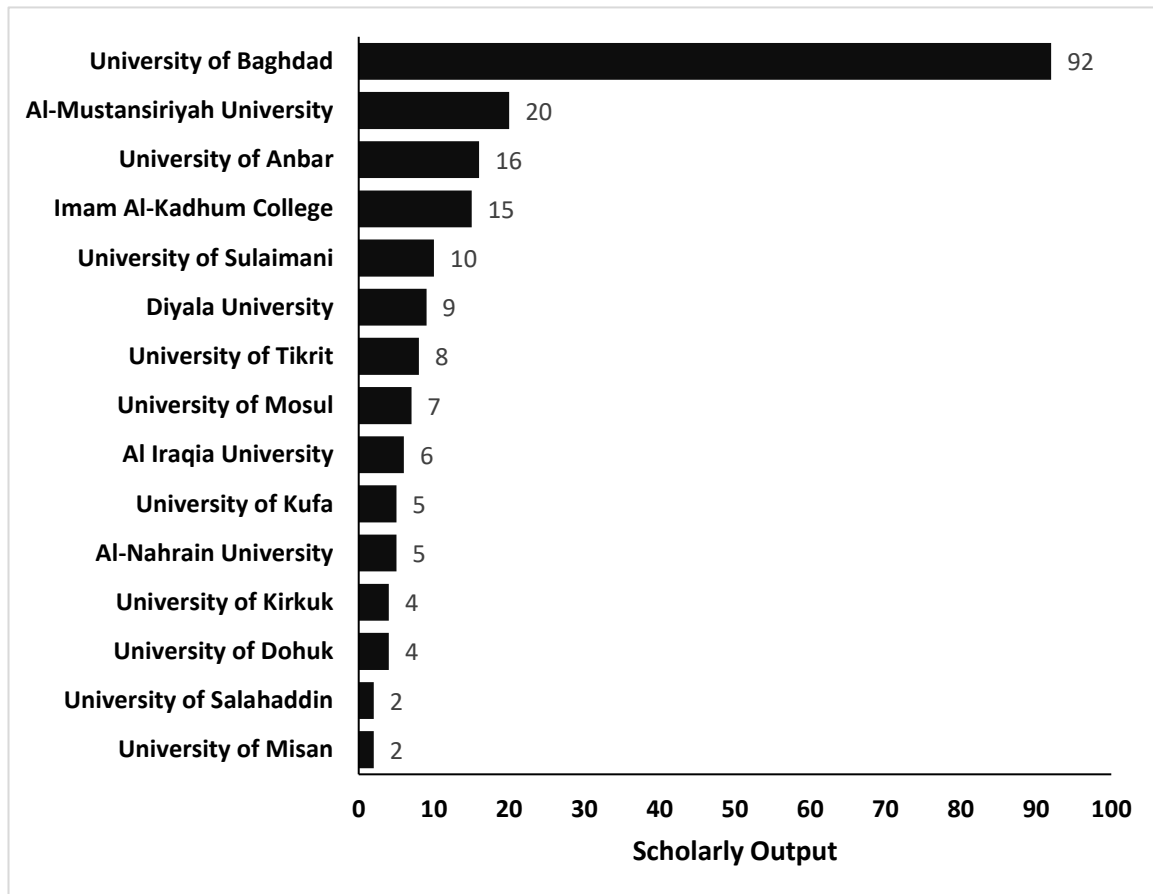


Fig. 1. Bibliometric mapping of political science and international relations research in Iraqi public universities (2020–2024) based on scopus.

**Table 1.** Show a range of metrics was employed to evaluate the research performance of the institutions.

Metric	Definition
Scholarly Output	The aggregate number of publications for each institution
Citations	The total number of citations garnered by the publications of each institution
Authors	The total count of distinct authors linked with each institution
Citations per Publication	The mean number of citations per publication
Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI)	A metric that normalizes citation impact against the global average for the particular subject field, publication type, and year (Zanotto and Carvalho, 2021)
Productivity	The average number of publications per author.

**Fig. 2.** Scholarly output by Iraqi institution (2020–2024).

### 3.1. Scholarly output and regional distribution

Fig. 2 illustrates that the University of Baghdad is the most prolific institution with 92 publications, which is over four times the output of Al-Mustansiriyah University, the second most productive institution with 20 publications. The University of Anbar and Imam Al-Kadhum College follow with 16 and 15 publications, respectively. The remaining universities each have a scholarly output of 10 or fewer publications during this period.

The regional breakdown of this scholarly output, as shown in Fig. 3, reveals that Baghdad is the

predominant center for research in this discipline, with a cumulative output that significantly surpasses other regions. This aligns with the high productivity of universities located in the capital. Other regions like Ramadi, Sulaimani, and Baqubah exhibit a much lower research output.

### 3.2. Citation metrics and impact

Citation indices are essential tools for assessing the influence of scholarly publications, offering insight into the visibility and academic contribution of research outputs. Table 2 highlights the five most cited publications in Political Science and

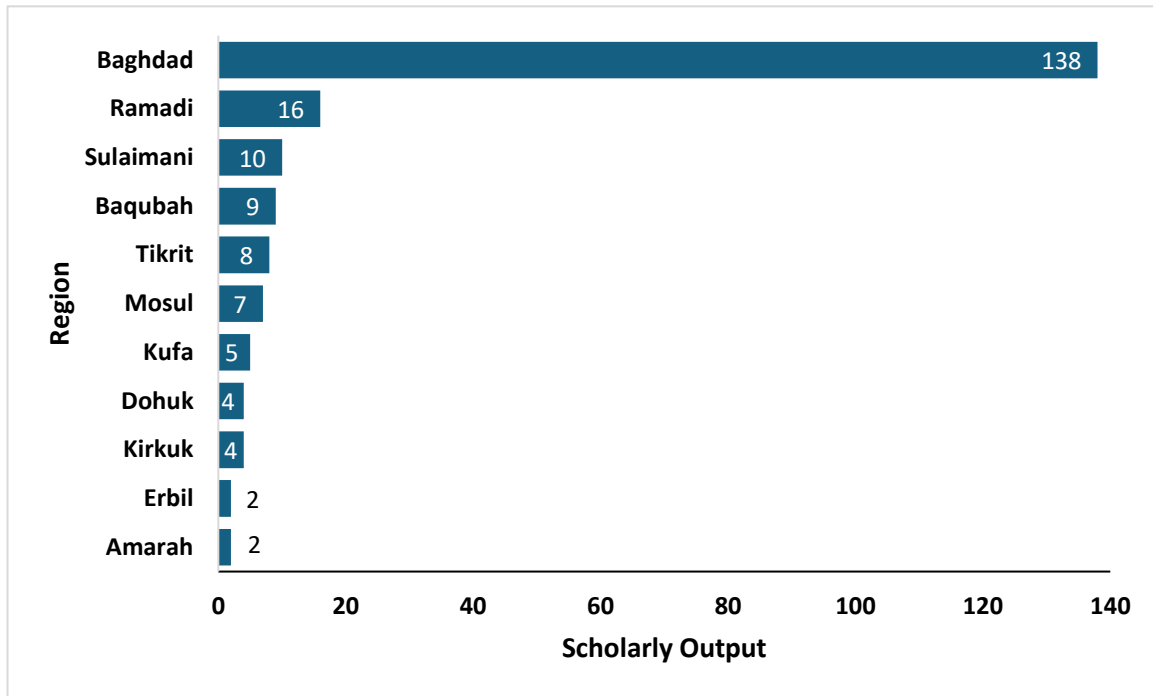


Fig. 3. Scholarly output by region.

Table 2. Top cited political science and international relations publications by Iraqi governmental university faculty (2020–2024).

Title	Author(s)	Number of Citations	Affiliated Institution
The Role of Decision-maker in Crisis Management: A qualitative Study Using Grounded Theory (COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis as A Model)	Al-Dabbagh (2020a)	66	University of Mosul
Good governance and COVID-19: The digital bureaucracy to response the pandemic (Singapore as a model)	Abdou (2021)	29	University of Duhok
Sustainable development and its role in containing crises: Corona virus pandemic crisis (COVID-19) in China as a model	Al-Dabbagh (2020b)	11	University of Mosul
Strategies to Gain International Recognition: Iraqi Kurdistan's September 2017 Referendum for Independence	Palani et al. (2021)	10	University of Salahaddin
IRAQI KURDISTAN'S 2017 INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM: THE KDP'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MOTIVES	(Hama, 2020)	8	University of Sulaimani

International Relations authored by faculty members at Iraqi governmental universities during the 2020–2024 period. These papers demonstrate varying levels of scholarly reach, with notable thematic concentrations on governance, crisis management, and regional independence movements.

An analysis of citations per publication (Fig. 4) offers a contrasting view of institutional performance. The University of Mosul leads with an average of 10.9 citations per publication, succeeded by the University of Dohuk (9.5) and the University of Salahaddin (8.5). This implies that although these universities produce fewer publications, their work achieves a

greater impact in terms of citations. The University of Baghdad, despite its high volume of publications, has a significantly lower average of 0.6 citations per publication.

This pattern is further clarified by FWCI presented in Fig. 5. The University of Salahaddin has an impressive FWCI of 2.34, signifying that its research is cited more than twice the world average for comparable publications. The University of Dohuk also performs well with an FWCI of 1.12. The University of Mosul's FWCI of 0.92 is close to the world average. Conversely, the majority of other Iraqi universities, including the high-output University of Baghdad

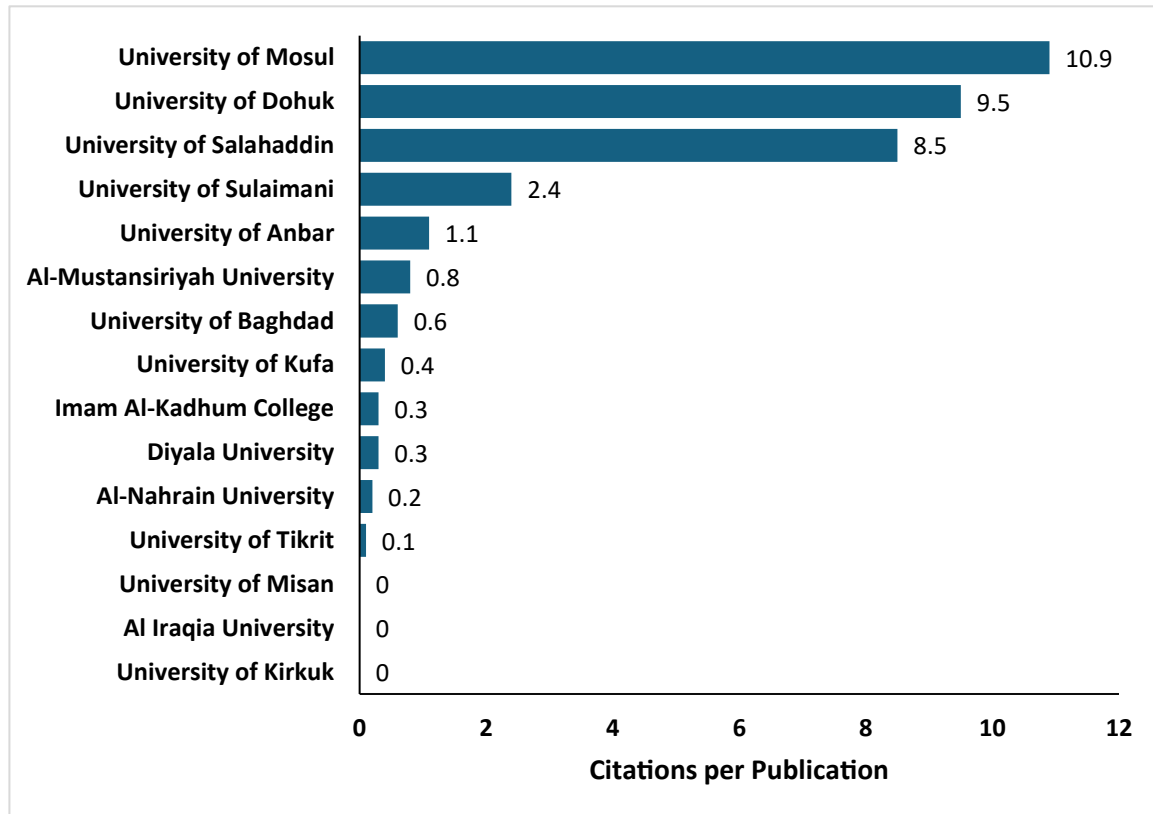


Fig. 4. Citations per publication.

(FWCI of 0.08), have an FWCI substantially below the world average.

### 3.3. Author productivity

Regarding productivity, measured as output per author (Fig. 6), the University of Dohuk demonstrates the highest productivity with an average of 2.5 publications per author. Most other universities have a productivity level of approximately 1 or less, indicating that a large number of authors contribute to a relatively small volume of publications.

### 3.4. Comparative performance of top institutions and correlation of metrics

The radar chart in Fig. 7 presents a normalized comparison of the top five universities across key metrics. This visualization underscores the diverse strengths of these institutions. For example, the University of Baghdad excels in scholarly output, whereas the University of Salahaddin and the University of Dohuk show superior performance in citation impact.

The correlation matrix of publication metrics (Fig. 8) uncovers several noteworthy relationships. A

very strong positive correlation exists between scholarly output and the number of authors (0.99444), as would be expected. There is a moderate positive correlation between citations and scholarly output (0.4266062). Citations per publication have a strong positive correlation with the total number of citations (0.7141913) and a moderate positive correlation with the FWCI (0.8374709). Importantly, scholarly output shows a weak negative correlation with citations per publication (−0.1868334) and FWCI (−0.205809), implying that a greater quantity of publications does not necessarily correspond to a higher impact.

## 4. Discussion

The outcomes of this bibliometric analysis of research in Political Science and International Relations from Iraqi governmental universities between 2020 and 2024 provide a multifaceted view of the field. A prominent finding is the significant concentration of research output at a handful of institutions, most notably the University of Baghdad. This preeminence in publication volume, however, does not align with a correspondingly high research impact, as indicated by citations per publication and FWCI. This may point

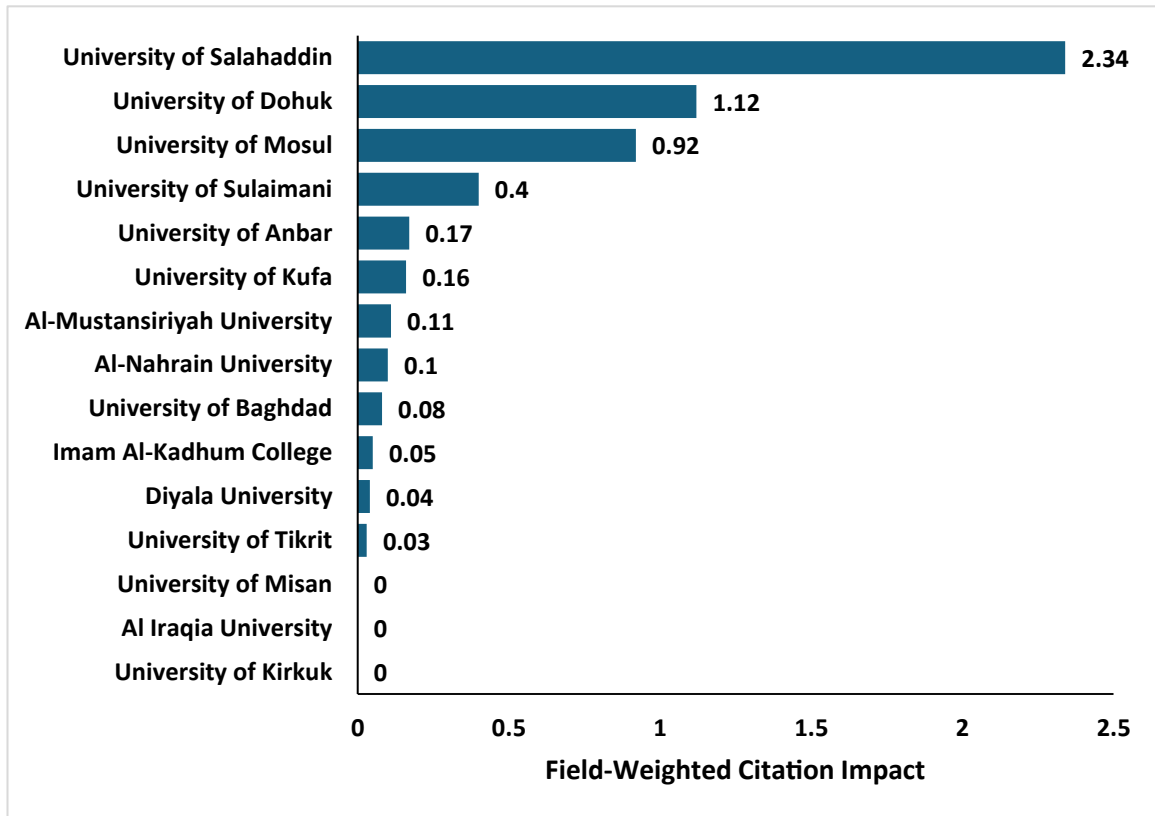


Fig. 5. Field-weighted citation impact.

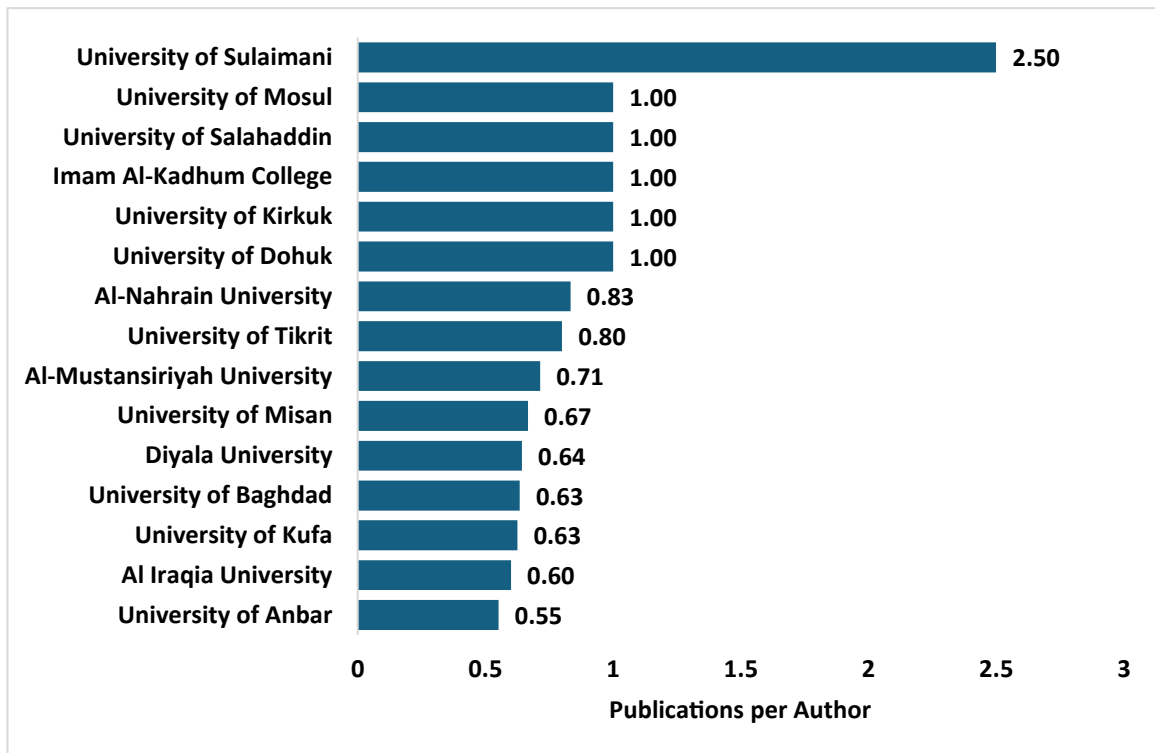


Fig. 6. Productivity (publications per author).

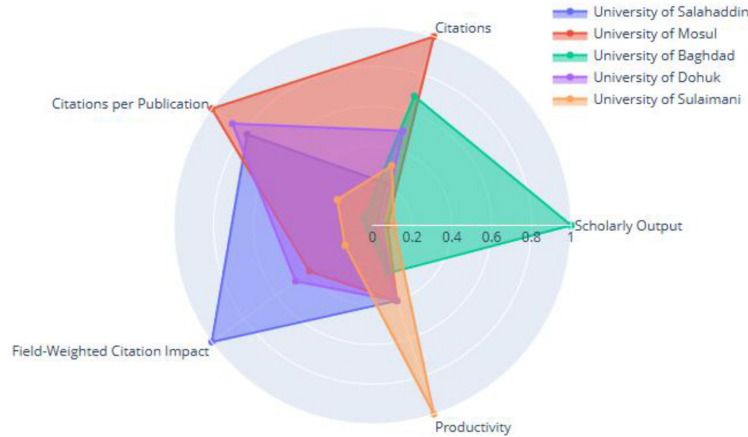


Fig. 7. Comparison of top Iraqi institutes (normalized metrics).

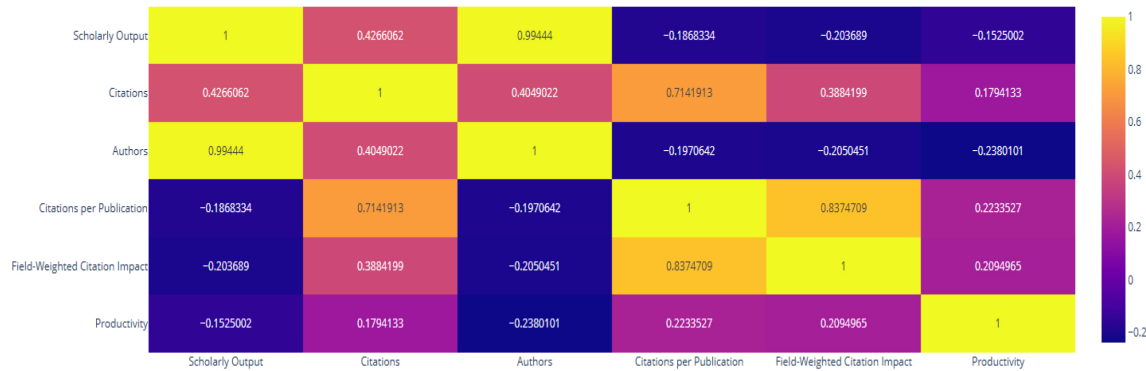


Fig. 8. Correlation matrix of publication metrics.

to a “publish or perish” culture at the University of Baghdad that could be prioritizing quantity over quality [11–13].

Conversely, universities with a considerably lower scholarly output, such as the University of Salahaddin, the University of Dohuk, and the University of Mosul, exhibit a markedly higher research impact. This suggests that these institutions might be cultivating a research environment that promotes more impactful and internationally recognized scholarship. The high FWCI of the University of Salahaddin is particularly noteworthy and indicates a center of research excellence that could serve as a paradigm for other institutions in the nation [14].

The regional disparity in research productivity with Baghdad as its central base is another crucial finding. Whilst it is to be foreseen by reason of concentration of research facilities and institutions at the capital city, it points to a need to strengthen research capacity building at non-capital universities throughout Iraq. The research milieu would become geographically more equitable and would help diversify perspectives at large amidst research areas

and help augment the intellectual enrichment of the nation at large [15].

The low productivity in terms of publications per author across most universities raises concerns. It may indicate that a substantial proportion of academics are not actively involved in research or that there are systemic obstacles impeding their productivity. This could be attributed to various factors, such as heavy teaching responsibilities, insufficient funding, and restricted access to international research collaborations [16].

The undeniable negative correlation between scholarly output and citation impact metrics highlights the significant gap between research quantity and quality. It challenges the misguided belief that simply boosting the number of publications will elevate the global standing of Iraqi academia. Rather, a far more strategic approach that prioritizes the enhancement of research quality and visibility is essential [17].

Briefly, this study reveals a sophisticated and diverse profile of Political Science and International Relations research out of Iraq. Despite overt challenges such as a generally weak research contribution

and interregional disparities, there are some encouraging signals of high-quality research emanating from certain research institutions. These are conclusions with significant implications for policymakers and university heads interested in improving the research capacity of Iraqi universities and its contribution to international and national scholarship. Another possible direction for research would be to follow up with research on qualitative aspects of this research output to note key trends and research techniques in this field. A substantially deeper investigation of those factors achieving strong research contribution at selected universities would represent another informative research direction [18, 19].

### Conflict of interest

The authors have no any conflicts to declare.

### Author contribution

This section specifies the roles and contributions of each author in this manuscript equilly.

### Data availability

Authors mention whether the data supporting their findings is available publicly, under specific conditions or on request.

### Funded

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