



Bibliometric analysis of the publication activity of the journal “Maternal and Child Health” based on the RSCI. Part II. Recommendations for improving publication quality

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Abstract. National medical journals play a key role in shaping the scientific agenda, advancing research, and translating scientific evidence into clinical and organisational practice, particularly in the field of maternal and child health. The aim of this study was to synthesise the findings of a bibliometric analysis of the publication activity of the journal “Maternal and Child Health” and to develop recommendations aimed at promoting research in the field of maternal and Child Health. A retrospective bibliometric analysis was conducted of 510 articles published in the journal “Maternal and Child Health” and indexed in the Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI) between 2009 and 2025. An adapted PRISMA flow diagram was used for study selection. A total of 61 journal issues were examined, and citation indicators together with author and institutional profiles were analysed. The findings showed that the journal’s citation impact is primarily driven by publications from its formative years (2009-2011), predominantly in paediatrics and epidemiology. Of the 510 publications, 140 were authored by a single researcher, while large multicentre research teams were represented only sporadically. The analysis confirmed a high degree of institutional concentration and the predominance of single-author and small collaborative teams, limiting the development of multicentre research. Furthermore, the five most productive authors were affiliated with the journal’s publishing institution, the National Centre for Maternal and Child Health. Recommendations are proposed for the digital transformation of the editorial process, the internationalisation of journal content, and the promotion of interinstitutional collaboration. The findings may be useful for editors and publishers of national

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medical journals, specialists in bibliometrics, and healthcare administrators seeking to enhance the quality and international visibility of regional scientific journals

Keywords: maternal and child health; paediatrics; scientific journal; bibliometrics; citation analysis; Hirsch index; editorial policy

Introduction

The journal “Maternal and Child Health” (JMCH) is one of the leading specialised journals of the Kyrgyz Republic in the field of maternal and child healthcare and, according to the Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI), demonstrates one of the highest citation rates among the five leading national medical journals indexed in the database [1]. According to E.V. Semenov [2], the role of regional and national medical journals within the global scientific ecosystem remains the subject of active debate. Several scholars, including L. Buckner *et al.* [3] and H. Jamali & D. Danaei [4], have emphasised that regional journals perform an indispensable function by supporting local research initiatives, preserving the contextual specificity of scientific knowledge, and ensuring access to research findings for practitioners who often lack access to subscription-based international databases. I.D. Turgel *et al.* [5] further argued that without a well-developed network of regional journals, locally generated scientific evidence remains largely invisible to the international research community.

In their analysis of publication activity across Central Asia, B.F. Kocyigit *et al.* [6], using data from SCImago Journal & Country Rank for the period 1996–2021, found that Kazakhstan demonstrated the strongest growth in publication output among the countries of the region, whereas Kyrgyzstan lagged considerably behind in terms of the absolute number of indexed publications. The authors concluded that the principal limiting factors remain insufficient international collaboration and the low proportion of articles published in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. Improving publication quality in national journals is therefore regarded as a systemic challenge. B.F. Kocyigit *et al.* [7] also noted that the major obstacles to establishing reputable regional journals include inadequate editorial infrastructure, the absence of transparent peer-review procedures, and limited digital literacy within the author community. They concluded that the sustainable development of national scientific journals requires a systematic approach to strengthening editorial policy.

Bibliometric analysis has become an increasingly widespread tool for evaluating scientific journals in recent years. According to A.D. Hoang [8], bibliometric methods enable the quantitative assessment of publication trends, the identification of the most productive authors, the mapping of major thematic clusters, and the evaluation of international collaboration within individual journals. M.J. Page *et al.* [9] pointed out that the appropriate interpretation of bibliometric data requires

the application of adapted methodological frameworks and standardised reporting instruments, such as the PRISMA flow diagram. In the field of maternal and child health, bibliometric studies have demonstrated the considerable diversity of the global research landscape. Y. Yuanti *et al.* [10] conducted a bibliometric assessment of global research on maternal and child health, identifying the principal thematic clusters as early childhood health, the prevention of nutrition-related disorders, and health policy. The authors emphasised that the greatest citation impact is achieved by studies based on evidence-based approaches, particularly those employing systematic review methodologies [10]. Thus, bibliometric reviews in the field of maternal and child health have become increasingly important.

In the first part of the present bibliometric study, the publication activity of the JMCH was analysed, providing an overview of publication trends over time, mapping the journal's thematic structure, and comparing its scientometric indicators with those of other leading medical journals in Kyrgyzstan [1]. However, the findings require further synthesis to develop practice-oriented recommendations aimed at advancing research in maternal and child health and improving the scientific quality of published articles. From the perspective of clinical paediatrics, JMCH serves as an important national platform for disseminating evidence on regional epidemiology, the organisation of healthcare services for mothers and children, disease prevention, clinical outcomes, and the implementation of practical approaches that are often underrepresented in the international literature. Consequently, enhancing the quality and research capacity of publications in JMCH has direct practical significance for maternal and child healthcare and paediatric practice in Kyrgyzstan.

The present study aimed to synthesise the findings of the bibliometric analysis of JMCH's publication activity and to formulate evidence-based recommendations for advancing research in the field of maternal and child health. To achieve this aim, three principal research questions were formulated:

1. Which of the most highly cited publications in the Journal of “Maternal and Child Health” have made the greatest contribution to the field of maternal and child health?

2. What are the characteristics of the journal's author and institutional profile, including institutional distribution, the proportion of single-author articles, the level of research collaboration, and geographical coverage?

3. Which factors potentially constrain the further development of the Journal of “Maternal and Child Health”?

Materials and Methods

The present study employed a retrospective bibliometric analysis of the publication activity of the JMCH covering the period from 2009, the year of the journal's establishment, to 2025 inclusive. The primary data source was the RSCI [11]. The RSCI was selected as the sole national scientometric database that has systematically indexed all issues of JMCH since its inception,

thereby ensuring the completeness and reproducibility of the dataset [12].

An adapted PRISMA flow diagram [9] was used to visualise and standardise the bibliometric record selection process. This approach was adopted in accordance with international standards for reporting systematic and bibliometric reviews, as it provides a transparent framework for the inclusion and exclusion of publications. During the identification stage, all JMCH publications indexed in the RSCI as of 28 December 2025 were retrieved (Fig. 1).

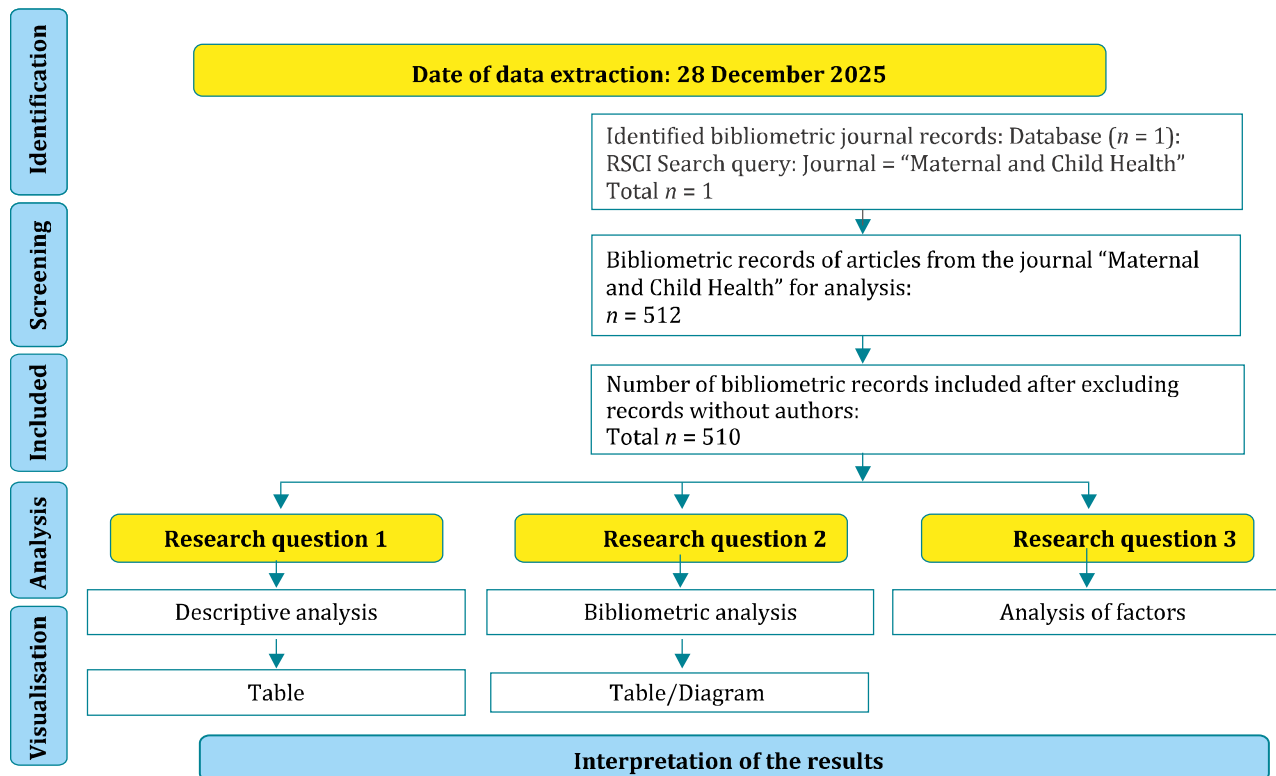


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram for the collection of research materials

Source: created by the authors based on a template [9]

During the screening stage, the following exclusion criteria were applied: absence of author information (anonymous publications) and editorial or technical materials lacking scientific content. The inclusion criteria comprised the presence of at least one identified author and classification as a scientific or scientific-practical publication. Descriptive data analysis was performed using summary tables and charts generated in Microsoft Excel 365. This software was selected as an accessible and reproducible tool for descriptive statistical analysis, sufficient for the purposes of the present bibliometric study without the need for specialised bibliometric software.

To address the first research question concerning the thematic focus of the most highly cited publications, a systematic literature review involving full-text analysis of the relevant articles was conducted [13-15].

Articles were classified manually according to their thematic content based on an assessment of their titles, abstracts, and full texts. To address the second research question regarding the author and institutional profile of JMCH, the following scientometric indicators were extracted from the RSCI: the number of publications per author in JMCH, the total number of publications indexed in the RSCI, the Hirsch index (h-index), the number of publications in international journals, the number of co-authors per publication, author affiliations, and affiliated institutions. To address the third research question concerning factors potentially limiting the journal's development, qualitative content analysis of RSCI data on author affiliations and citing institutions was undertaken [11-12]. Institutions were categorised as either domestic (Kyrgyz Republic) or international to assess the geographical reach of the journal's audience.

The study was based exclusively on publicly available aggregated RSCI data and did not involve the collection of personal data from authors or patients. Consequently, approval from an ethics committee was not required.

Results

The first research question aimed to determine which of the most highly cited publications in JMCH have contributed most substantially to advancing scientific knowledge in the field of maternal and child health.

Analysis of RSCI data covering 510 publications between 2009 and 2025 revealed a marked asymmetry in the distribution of citations. The nine most highly cited articles, each receiving between 15 and 18 citations, were all published during 2009-2011, corresponding to the journal's formative period (Table 1). This pattern suggests that the citation impact of JMCH was established during the early years of its publication history and has not been reinforced to a comparable extent in subsequent years.

Table 1. Most highly cited articles published in the journal "Maternal and Child Health"

No.	Authors	Article title	Year	Number of citations
1	G.M. Saatova T. Nakajima N. Omurzakova	Rheumatic fever in Kyrgyzstan: prevalence, consequences, and control strategies	2009	18
2	L.D. Rybalkina E.M. Maksutova O.Zh. Omoshova	The human reproductive system under conditions of environmental degradation	2009	17
3	A.A. Kucherbaev	Haemorrhagic vasculitis in children	2009	17
4	Ch.A. Ishenalieva	Assessment of emergency obstetric care in the Kyrgyz Republic as a factor in reducing maternal mortality	2009	16
5	T.T. Mamyrbayeva A.A. Anarbayeva	Approaches to the prevention of nutrition-related diseases in young children in the Kyrgyz Republic	2009	16
6	K.S. Sarzhanova	Dietary intake of children and adolescents in different regions of the Kyrgyz Republic	2009	16
7	M.E. Asheraliev G.Sh. Majmerova	Comparative effectiveness of combined therapy regimens in children with bronchial asthma	2011	15
8	D.K. Kudayarov	Health: the beginning of life	2009	15
9	I.G. Shaiderova	Intracardiac haemodynamics in children with acute and recurrent pulmonary disorders complicated by bronchial obstruction syndrome	2009	15

Source: compiled by the authors based on [12-21]

The thematic analysis of the most highly cited articles identified three major content clusters reflecting the scientific priorities of the period: systemic diseases in children, organisational challenges in paediatric and obstetric care, and nutrition and preventive paediatrics. Within the systemic diseases cluster, the most highly cited publication was the study by G.M. Saatova *et al.* [13] on rheumatic fever in Kyrgyzstan (18 citations), in which the authors reported a high regional prevalence of the disease, characterised by a predominance of latent forms and progressive cardiovascular involvement. A similarly high level of scientific interest was observed for the study by A.A. Kucherbaev [15] on haemorrhagic vasculitis in children (17 citations and 142 views in the RSCI), with the number of views substantially exceeding the journal average, indicating sustained clinical interest in this topic.

Within the organisational paediatrics cluster, particular attention was drawn to the article by Ch.A. Ishe-nalieva [16] assessing emergency obstetric care in Kyrgyzstan (16 citations), which documented systemic deficiencies associated with healthcare restructuring during the post-Soviet period. A similar perspective was presented in the analytical study by D.K. Kudayarov [20], in which the deterioration of medical and

social health indicators was attributed to the dismantling of specialised paediatric services and reductions in hospital bed capacity. Notably, both publications adopted a problem-oriented analytical approach, which may explain their extensive use as methodological references in subsequent studies addressing healthcare reform within the region. The preventive medicine cluster comprised studies highlighting persistent deficiencies in child nutrition. K.S. Sarzhanova [18] documented chronic deficiencies in essential nutrients among children and adolescents across different regions of the Kyrgyz Republic (16 citations), while T.T. Mamyrbayeva & A.A. Anarbayeva [17] identified the low prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding as a significant risk factor for nutrition-related disorders (16 citations). The reproductive health dimension of prevention was addressed by L.D. Rybalkina *et al.* [14], who demonstrated an association between anthropogenic air pollution and increased rates of spontaneous miscarriage and infertility in urban populations (17 citations). This study is particularly noteworthy because it integrates paediatric and obstetric-gynaecological perspectives, illustrating the journal's early potential for interdisciplinary research.

Analysis of the pulmonology theme, represented by the studies of M.E. Asheraliev & G.Sh. Majmerova [19]

on the effectiveness of therapy for bronchial asthma (15 citations) and I.G. Shaiderova [21] on intracardiac haemodynamics in bronchial obstruction syndrome (15 citations), indicates that clinically oriented studies providing practical therapeutic recommendations also generate sustained citation impact. Thus, the answer to the first research question is that the greatest contribution to the field has been made by paediatric and epidemiological publications published between 2009 and 2011. The absence of similarly comprehensive studies in subsequent years has contributed to the stagnation of the journal's citation profile and represents an important consideration for the future development of its editorial policy.

The second research question focused on the author and institutional profile of JMCH, with the characteristics of the journal's most productive authors summarised in Table 2. Table 2 demonstrates the high scientific productivity of the journal's leading contributors, as reflected by their scientometric indicators in the RSCI. The most productive author was G.M. Saatova, who published the largest number of articles both in JMCH (46 publications) and in international journals (79 publications), consistent with the high citation impact identified in the preceding analyses. Notably, all five of the journal's most productive authors were affiliated with the National Centre for Maternal and Child Health of the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic (NCMCH).

Table 2. Top five most productive authors of journal “Maternal and Child Health”

No.	Author	Number of publications in JMCH	Number of publications in the RSCI	RSCI Hirsch index	Publications in international journals
1	G.M. Saatova	46	104	8	79
2	K.A. Uzakbaev	29	50	5	39
3	M.E. Asheraliev	27	60	7	47
4	G.Sh. Majmerova	21	59	6	39
5	Sh.A. Sulaimanov	18	74	8	42

Source: compiled by the authors based on [12]

Notably, the highest Hirsch index (h-index = 8) was recorded for G.M. Saatova & Sh.A. Sulaimanov, although Sh.A. Sulaimanov contributed a smaller number of publications to JMCH (18 articles). K.A. Uzakbaev, M.E. Asheraliev, and G.Sh. Majmerova also demonstrated sustained contributions to the journal, with 29, 27, and 21 publications, respectively. Overall, all five authors had published a substantial number of articles

in international journals, indicating that their research has gained recognition beyond the Kyrgyz Republic and highlighting their significant contribution to the advancement of healthcare and medical science in the country. The authorship structure of publications in JMCH, presented in Figure 2, provides an overview of the level of research collaboration according to the size of author teams across the entire study period.

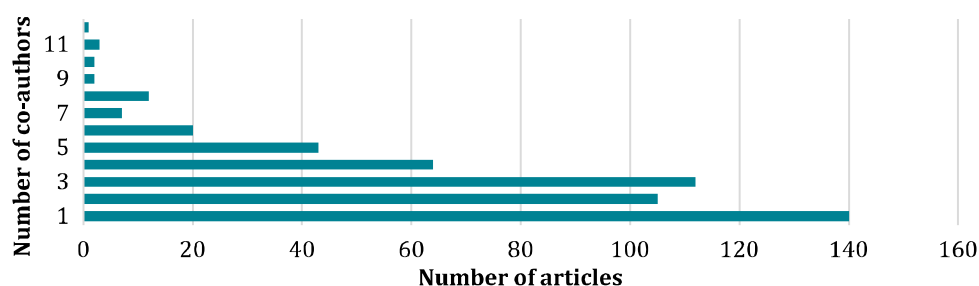


Figure 2. Distribution of articles in the journal “Maternal and Child Health” by number of co-authors

Source: compiled by the authors based on [12]

The analysis of the authorship structure of publications in JMCH, presented in Figure 2, shows that the largest proportion of articles were authored by a single researcher (140 publications), followed by teams of two (105 publications) and three authors (112 publications). Publications produced by large research teams comprising seven or more authors were relatively rare. This pattern suggests that large-scale studies requiring extensive multidisciplinary

collaboration or multicentre participation constitute only a small proportion of the journal's editorial portfolio. Analysis of the 510 JMCH publications published between 2009 and 2025 revealed distinctive features of the journal's institutional profile, characterised by a high concentration of publication output within a limited number of institutions and the predominance of single-author and small-team studies (Table 3).

Table 3. Measured resistance and voltage values for TiO₂ and ZrO₂ films

Category	Leading institutions (indicators)	Number
Domestic institutions publishing in JMCH	I.K. Akhunbaev Kyrgyz State Medical Academy	42 publications
	Osh State University	25 publications
	B.N. Yeltsin Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University	16 publications
International institutions publishing in JMCH	Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute	31 publications
	Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University	12 publications
	Andijan State Medical Institute	9 publications
Domestic institutions citing articles published in JMCH	National Centre for Maternal and Child Health, Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic	70 publications
	I.K. Akhunbaev Kyrgyz State Medical Academy	16 publications
	Osh State University	9 publications
International institutions citing articles published in JMCH	N.I. Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University	8 publications
	Russian Medical Academy of Continuous Professional Education	6 publications
	Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute	6 publications
	Saint Petersburg State Pediatric Medical University	5 publications

Note: the title corresponds to the titles in the RSCI database

Source: created by the authors based on [12]

To provide a more comprehensive assessment of the reach of JMCH, institutions were categorised as either domestic (Kyrgyz Republic) or international (primarily the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan), and the number of citing publications was analysed. The domestic sector accounted for the majority of both readership and authorship, reflecting the journal's predominantly national scientific community. The National centre for maternal and child health, Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic, as the journal's publisher, made the largest contribution to citation activity, with 70 citing publications. I.K. Akhunbaev Kyrgyz State Medical Academy (16 publications) and Osh State University (9 publications) were among the leading institutions actively using the journal's articles in both educational and research activities. Although Russian institutions, including Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University and the Russian Medical Academy of continuous professional education, accounted for relatively few citing publications, their participation nevertheless demonstrates the relevance of research from Kyrgyzstan to paediatric healthcare in the Russian Federation. Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute (6 publications) emerged as the journal's principal international partner within Central Asia. However, the journal contained no publications reporting multicentre studies involving authors from multiple countries, despite such international collaborations becoming an increasingly important characteristic of contemporary biomedical research. Thus, the second research question identified several limitations of JMCH, including a relatively narrow author base, a high degree of affiliation with the National centre for maternal and child health, and the predominance of single-author or small-team publications.

The third research question synthesised the findings from both parts of the study in order to identify the systemic barriers affecting the further development of JMCH. Since 2025, JMCH has undertaken a

substantial optimisation of its editorial processes. The overall design and presentation of published articles have been significantly improved, with manuscripts now including complete author information and a recommended citation format. Recent issues of the journal (Issue 4, 2025) have featured articles addressing emerging topics, including new concepts in the early primary prevention of cardiovascular disease [22], the digitalisation of healthcare in Kyrgyzstan [23], and the application of laparoscopic surgery in paediatric practice [24-25]. The publication of a study by S.Z. Garaeva from Azerbaijan [26] also indicates the renewal of scientific collaboration with other CIS countries. The most important recent development, however, has been the launch of the journal's own website [27]. The website provides access to the journal's editorial policy, author guidelines, an online manuscript submission system, and recent issues. Establishing an independent web platform is expected to substantially improve the journal's visibility and recognition while facilitating more effective communication with both readers and prospective authors. Overall, the comprehensive bibliometric analysis of JMCH identified several systemic barriers that continue to limit its international visibility and scientometric performance.

First, although the journal's website represents an important step forward, it remains at an early stage of development. A fully functional journal website serves as the journal's primary point of contact for international authors and indexing services, including Scopus, Web of Science, and PubMed, by providing direct access to full-text articles, archives, and an online manuscript submission system. Without such infrastructure, a journal remains relatively invisible to search engines and the wider international scientific community. In addition, the digitalisation of published articles and the automation of citation management can enhance citation performance. Integration with bibliographic

management software such as Zotero, Mendeley, and EndNote, together with citation export functions on platforms such as eLibrary.ru and Google Scholar, enables the automatic generation of reference lists in both national and international citation styles.

A second major obstacle to international recognition is the journal's predominant use of the Russian language, which effectively restricts its readership to the post-Soviet region. Furthermore, articles published in the Kyrgyz language are not retrieved through Russian-language search queries. Given the dominance of English as the lingua franca of scientific communication, articles published in Russian, even when accompanied by high-quality English abstracts, have relatively limited opportunities to attract citations in international journals [2]. Another barrier identified through the analysis of article keywords is the absence of standardisation according to internationally recognised controlled vocabularies, such as Medical Subject Headings (MeSH). This limits the discoverability and indexing of articles not only within eLibrary but also across major internet search platforms. MeSH is a hierarchical controlled vocabulary used by PubMed and MEDLINE to facilitate precise literature retrieval. Its adoption enables articles to be identified even when different authors use alternative terminology for the same concept.

JMCH also exhibits a high degree of institutional concentration. The predominance of publications authored by researchers affiliated with the NCMCH, the journal's publishing institution, creates the risk that the journal may be perceived as an institutional rather than a national scientific publication. Such institutional concentration is inconsistent with the principles of open science and may reduce the confidence of external authors and reviewers, who may regard the journal as a publication venue primarily intended for members of the host institution. In addition, the low proportion of multicentre and international studies further limits the journal's global visibility. The limited number of publications involving collaboration between different institutions and countries, particularly outside the former Soviet region, contrasts with the worldwide trend towards increasingly large and international research collaborations. Overall, five key systemic barriers were identified that are likely to shape the future development of JMCH.

Discussion

The bibliometric analysis of the publication activity of the journal "Maternal and Child Health" (JMCH) between 2009 and 2025 provided a comprehensive characterisation of the journal's scientometric profile and identified several systemic barriers to its further development. Overall, the findings are consistent with patterns reported in the contemporary literature on regional medical journals, while also revealing several characteristics specific to the scientific environment of

Central Asia. B.F. Kocyigit *et al.* [7], in their study of the role of regional and local journals within the academic ecosystem, concluded that such journals fulfil an indispensable function by providing visibility for locally relevant research that is often overlooked by international journals because of its limited global applicability. They further argued that regional journals serve as the primary platform for establishing research traditions in countries with developing scientific infrastructures. This conclusion is fully consistent with the findings of the present study. For the past 16 years, JMCH has provided an important outlet for publishing clinical and epidemiological evidence specific to Kyrgyzstan that would be unlikely to find a place in international journals. Nevertheless, M. Yessirkepov & B.F. Kocyigit [28] observed that the value of a regional journal depends not merely on its existence but also on the quality of its publications, the robustness of its editorial processes, and its citation performance. These are precisely the areas in which JMCH demonstrates substantial potential for further development [1].

One of the principal findings of the present study was the concentration of citation impact within articles published during the journal's formative period (2009–2011). A similar pattern was described by A.Y. Gasparyan *et al.* [29] in their analysis of editorial policies across a range of biomedical journals. They found that the early issues of newly established journals frequently accumulate a disproportionately high share of citations because they address thematic gaps not yet covered by other journals within the region. The authors further emphasised that sustained growth in citation performance can only be achieved through the continuous improvement of methodological quality and the implementation of standardised reporting practices. The findings of the present study support this conclusion: the stagnation of JMCH's citation profile after 2011 suggests that the journal has not fully capitalised on the potential established during its formative years.

The high level of institutional concentration identified in the present study, reflected in the dominance of the NCMCH within both the authorship and citation profiles, is also supported by the international literature. Y. Yuanti *et al.* [10], in their bibliometric analysis of the global research landscape in maternal and child health, reported that publication output in specialised journals from low- and middle-income countries is typically concentrated within two or three leading institutions. The authors regarded this pattern as a structural limitation that constrains thematic diversity and the development of multicentre research. However, unlike Y. Yuanti *et al.* [10], who considered institutional concentration to be an inevitable stage in the development of national journals, the findings of the present study suggest that JMCH has reached a stage at which the deliberate diversification of its author base should become a strategic priority rather than a long-term objective.

The predominance of single-author and small-team publications (one to three authors) in JMCH is consistent with broader publication patterns reported across the scientific landscape of Central Asia. B.F. Kocyigit *et al.* [6], in their analysis of the publication performance of Central Asian countries based on SCImago data from 1996 to 2021, found that low levels of research collaboration constitute one of the principal indicators of underdeveloped research networks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan compared with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The authors further demonstrated that multi-centre and international collaborative studies account for a disproportionately large share of citations in regional journals. The present study complements these observations with journal-specific evidence, showing that publications involving seven or more authors are rare in JMCH, while articles co-authored by researchers from more than one country were virtually absent throughout the study period. According to O. Zimba & A.Y. Gasparyan [30], such an imbalance reflects an underdeveloped culture of academic collaboration together with a lack of institutional incentives for inter-organisational research partnerships.

The analysis also demonstrated that JMCH publishes predominantly in Russian, substantially limiting its international visibility. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of G.V. Yamshchikov & G.P. Schmid [31], who reported that Russian-language medical journals from Central Asia are rarely cited in Scopus or Web of Science and that many authors publishing in these journals have limited experience in preparing manuscripts according to international publication standards. However, unlike the view that language represents an insurmountable obstacle for small national journals, the present study supports a more optimistic perspective. Recent advances in artificial intelligence-based machine translation, together with the mandatory provision of English-language metadata, including article titles, abstracts, and keywords, have the potential to substantially improve the international visibility of JMCH without imposing considerable financial burdens.

Another systemic barrier identified in the present study is the limited transparency of the journal's peer-review procedures. S. Ahmed & M. Yessirkepov [32], in their analysis of reviewer profiles from Central Asia on the Publons platform, found that the region remains markedly underrepresented within the global peer-review community. Most researchers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan were not registered on international reviewer platforms and had received no formal training in scientific peer review. The authors regarded this as a structural barrier that reduces publication quality and hinders the inclusion of regional journals in major international indexing databases. This conclusion is fully consistent with the findings of the present study, which indicate that the absence of standardised peer-review requirements

represents one of the factors limiting the further development of JMCH. Likewise, C.A. Mebane [33] concluded that transparent double-blind peer review is significantly associated with higher citation rates, providing further support for its implementation within JMCH.

The finding that JMCH includes relatively few international co-authors also aligns with the broader discussion concerning inequalities in authorship within global medical research. A. Vecchio *et al.* [34], in a bibliometric analysis of publications in family medicine journals, demonstrated that researchers from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) remain systematically underrepresented as first and senior authors compared with colleagues from high-income countries. Importantly, the authors also observed that this disparity has gradually diminished over time, with the proportion of first authors from LMICs increasing from 59% in 2018 to 85% in 2023. These findings suggest that, with appropriate institutional support and targeted editorial strategies, national journals can progressively expand external collaborations and achieve greater integration into the global scientific community.

Conclusions

A retrospective bibliometric analysis of 510 JMCH publications indexed in the RSCI between 2009 and 2025 provided a comprehensive characterisation of the journal's scientometric profile in relation to the three research questions. Regarding the first research question, the findings demonstrated that the citation impact of JMCH was established primarily during the journal's formative period (2009-2011). The nine most highly cited articles (15-18 citations) were all published during this period and fell within three principal thematic clusters: systemic diseases in children (including rheumatic fever and haemorrhagic vasculitis), organisational aspects of paediatric and obstetric care, and nutrition and preventive paediatrics. Publications combining region-specific evidence with robust clinical or epidemiological approaches achieved the greatest citation impact.

With respect to the second research question, the author profile of JMCH was characterised by the high productivity of a relatively small group of contributors. The five most productive authors, led by G.M. Saatova (46 publications in JMCH, h-index = 8), were all affiliated with the NCMCH. Analysis of the authorship structure demonstrated the predominance of single-author publications (140 articles) and small research teams comprising two or three authors (105 and 112 articles, respectively), whereas publications involving seven or more authors were uncommon. Throughout the study period, multicentre international research was virtually absent from the journal. Regarding the third research question, five major systemic barriers to the journal's development were identified: the early stage of development of the journal's website, the predominance of Russian-language publications, the

absence of keyword standardisation using the MeSH thesaurus, a high degree of institutional concentration centred on the publishing organisation, and the limited proportion of interinstitutional and international research collaborations.

The findings provide a foundation for future research, including comparative bibliometric analyses of JMCH alongside comparable medical journals from Central Asia and Russia to identify regional publication patterns and support the optimisation of editorial policy. Longitudinal citation analysis and bibliometric network analysis using software such as VOSviewer and Bibliometrix represent particularly promising approaches for visualising scientific collaboration and

identifying strategies to enhance the journal's citation performance. Further studies should also examine the journal's readership and repeat the bibliometric assessment after 3-5 years to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented improvements.

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None.

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