

# **BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY ON QUALITY JOURNALISM IN THE SCOPUS DATABASE: EVOLUTION OF THE TOPIC AND CHARACTERISTICS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article uses a term search to describe how academic work on the relationship between journalism and quality has evolved. It relies on a bibliometric study and content analysis of the Scopus database. Using the VOSviewer tool, this article presents automated analyses of the Scopus system and network maps that pertain to article terms. The goal is to outline scientific production's features and the impact of research on quality journalism identifying emerging trends in this research area. The study sample consists of 971 research articles published between 1939 and 2022, specifically focusing on social sciences articles across various languages, indexed in Scopus.

The findings suggest a rising interest in journalism quality within analysed scientific journals, especially in the 21st century, predominantly in Western countries, despite a growing trend in Eastern countries. The United States is the primary source for articles, citations, and first authors. Additionally, the three journals publishing most on journalism quality are of Anglo-Saxon origin. Research clusters are developed on the object of study outside this axis, led by Spanish and Portuguese scientific production. The bibliometric analysis also shows the evolution of topics related to journalism quality.

## **KEYWORDS**

journalism quality, Scopus, bibliometric study, content analysis

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# **ESTUDO BIBLIOMÉTRICO SOBRE JORNALISMO DE QUALIDADE NA BASE DE DADOS SCOPUS: EVOLUÇÃO DO TEMA E CARACTERÍSTICAS**

## **RESUMO**

Este artigo pretende descrever a evolução da produção acadêmica sobre o binômio jornalismo e qualidade, a partir do estudo bibliométrico e análise de conteúdo da base de dados Scopus, através de busca do termo. Para tal, são apresentadas análises automatizadas do sistema Scopus e mapas das redes sobre os termos dos artigos, através da ferramenta VOSviewer. O objetivo é descrever as características da produção científica e o impacto da pesquisa no campo

de estudo do jornalismo de qualidade e identificar tendências neste campo de pesquisa. A amostra do estudo é composta por 971 artigos de pesquisa publicados entre os anos de 1939 e 2022 e indexados na Scopus, levados em consideração apenas artigos de pesquisa publicados na área de ciências sociais em qualquer idioma.

Os resultados indicam que o interesse sobre a qualidade do jornalismo cresce nas revistas científicas analisadas a partir do século XXI e com predominância de países ocidentais, apesar da tendência de crescimento nos países orientais. Os Estados Unidos são a origem do maior número de artigos, de citações e de primeiros autores; as três revistas que mais publicam sobre qualidade do jornalismo também são anglo-saxônicas. Há desenvolvimento de *clusters* de investigações sobre o objeto de estudo fora desse eixo, capitaneados pela produção científica espanhola e portuguesa. A análise bibliométrica também mostra a evolução dos temas relacionados com a qualidade do jornalismo.

#### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

qualidade do jornalismo, Scopus, estudo bibliométrico, análise de conteúdo

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of journalism plays a pivotal role in maintaining the field's credibility, informing the public and shaping public opinion. The concept of quality of journalism is frequently linked to the quality of the information it provides through news. Thus, ensuring that the information reported is accurate, objective and based on verifiable facts, without deliberate distortion, is essential. In this context, the relevance of the information to the public, the thoroughness of coverage and the clarity of the language used to communicate the information understandably are essential considerations. Consequently, scientific articles frequently discuss the media's adherence to accuracy, relevance, impartiality, clarity, and depth of information presented (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021; McQuail, 2010).

However, understanding the concept of quality in journalism extends beyond news content; it encompasses processes, information accuracy, the journalistic business, and the media. In information science studies, quality or knowledge is perceived as a commodity, subject to development, acquisition, ownership, or trade, considering objective and subjective facets of information. Ferreira (2011), for example, identified what information quality is in journal articles and proceedings of scientific events in the field of information sciences, communication and journalism in English between 1974 and 2009. They identified 101 attributes, condensed into 40 quality attributes grouped under three broad categories: "medium", "content", and "use". In communication science studies, there is a tension between longstanding concepts of quality, such as the diversity of sources or polyphony, thematic variety, advocating citizenship and reflecting the public debate (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), and concepts borrowed from information sciences (Tuominen et al., 2005) and introduced into the communication sciences through digitisation and convergence within the journalistic field during the 21st century (Jenkins, 2006; Salaverría Aliaga et al., 2010). Finally, the quality of information in journalism can

be defined as the professional activity of compiling, analysing and disseminating current information, adhering to legal regulations and codes of ethics (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014), as well as the business aspects of their activity (Sánchez, 2015). Assessing the quality of journalism should consider these dimensions, which mark or determine its limits, restrictions and requirements.

This article illustrates how quality journalism is researched in scientific journals indexed on the Scopus platform. This way, it aims to identify the prevalent themes related to the object of study, trace its evolution over the last few decades, and scrutinise the nationality of the authors and the origin of the articles, ultimately contributing to the current understanding of journalism and quality. The results of the research analysis are organised into two sections. The first section delves into the findings of the quantitative analysis, and the second section elaborates on relationships and co-occurrences using visualisation maps generated by the VOSviewer software.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In an overview of the subject of this article, Meyer's (2002) work stands out as a significant milestone in studying the accuracy and reliability of news information. Meyer's emphasis on rigorous research techniques underscores their crucial role in ensuring the quality of journalistic reports, thereby contributing significantly to the methodological underpinnings of quality journalism.

Alternate perspectives on media-provided information quality emphasise accuracy, objectivity, and clarity as pivotal components in determining the quality of journalism (Weaver & Wilhoit, 2020). Their comprehensive analyses have contributed to understanding the ethical and professional benchmarks that uphold press credibility. Blumler and Gurevitch (2002) underscore the significance of source diversity, polyphony, and representing public discourse in bolstering the quality of journalism and fostering active citizenship.

In the 21st century, Boczkowski (2005) explores how digitisation and convergence within journalism shape both the production and consumption of news, thereby influencing the quality of journalism in this century. McQuail (2010) is another reference on the quality of journalism, addressing the relevance of information to the public and the need for news coverage transcending mere factual reporting, delving deeper into issues to promote a comprehensive understanding of events.

Moreover, McQuail (2010) had previously outlined five quality values for the media: freedom, equality, diversity, truth and quality of information, and social order and solidarity. Meanwhile, Bogart (2004) assesses the quality of newspapers based on factors like source diversity, multiple perspectives, vigilant reporting, and providing contextualised news.

The media's public quality has the potential to elucidate democratic values for spectators and listeners (Dagger, 1997). Specifically in the United States, public journalism has been proposed as a means to improve the quality of the American press by reconnecting newsrooms with their readers, listeners and viewers, promoting citizen engagement in the pursuit of shared values and tangibly improving the press (Rosen, 2000).

Quality in communication can manifest prominently within popular journalism (Meijer, 2001), wherein it upholds attributes such as defending democracy, ensuring the independence of the journalist or information producer, maintaining rationality in opinions and content, and prioritising information quality. Conversely, the quality of information can be compromised within major news outlets (Christofolletti, 2008), especially when the communications sector experiences monopolisation, restricting information diversity to a handful of providers, a phenomenon exacerbated by the convergence and digitisation of communications.

Among the various approaches to achieving quality in journalism, certain fundamental elements play a crucial role in providing citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing: truth, loyalty to citizens, verification discipline, independence, impartial oversight of power, fostering public discourse, delivering meaningful, engaging, and pertinent information, ensuring comprehension and proportionality, and upholding freedom of conscience (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021). Similarly, these attributes emerge as parameters for journalism: truthfulness, communicability, plurality, freedom, socio-referentiality, intelligibility and transmissibility (Benedeti, 2009).

Listening carefully to news users could expand the scope of journalism's narrative and democratic repertoire (Meijer, 2013). Contemporary audiences seek involvement in the journalistic process and expect a more refined reflection of their circumstances, experiences, concerns and interests. Rather than focusing solely on media content or its intended purpose, media users often respond based on the daily impact of media. The "quality of life" concept emerges as a normative standard for value journalism.

Yet, scholars of journalism and professional journalists focus in particular on the quality of journalistic content and by extension on the quality of the production conditions of news. Audience research plays a marginal role in journalism studies. This may be partly due to the implicit or explicit assumption that a concern with quality is hard to reconcile with an audience perspective. (...) Although professional journalists are well aware of the increasing relevance of ratings, hits, shares and circulation figures, many in fact consider the mounting attention paid to audiences as one of the signs and causes of the gradual loss of journalistic quality. (Meijer, 2013, pp. 754–755)

Slow journalism offers an alternative to quality journalism, adopting an approach more aligned with the epistemological possibilities of postmodern culture (Harbers, 2016). This implies an aggregative truth rooted in open moral foundations, as journalists guide readers through relevant information, research, observation and experimentation with reality.

They are structured around the mediating subjectivity of the journalists and are thus openly subjective. Yet, they also draw on empirical research and scientific knowledge. Moreover, they are transparent about the reporting

process, which through their reflection becomes an integral part of the story itself. Thus, being transparent about their combination of different forms of knowledge, rooted in more traditional rational-positivistic inquiry as well as in personal experience and emotion, they try to reconcile the tension between the modernist and postmodernist claims to truth. (Harbers, 2016, p. 494)

Thus, the debate on the quality of journalism touches on the interest of various scholars and professionals, according to Lacy and Rosenstiel (2015), in three approaches: identifying the characteristics of quality-oriented news organisations, identifying the content attributes that reflect the output of these organisations, and analysing engagement data to see what kind of quality resonates with audiences. In this way, the researchers suggest common characteristics of content quality: quality of presentation, reliability, diversity, depth and breadth of information, comprehensiveness, public affairs, and geographical relevance.

Meanwhile, although the quality of journalism has been widely defined and assessed by professionals and researchers using a product approach, other perceptions on the subject vary in their approaches to determining the object of study beyond content. There are different directions or poles of interest regarding the quality of journalism (Pinto & Marinho, 2003): quality as a trait of the organisation and the product, quality perceived as a public service and quality seen as a strategic investment. With this, these authors identify quality in the enhanced organisational efficiency and effectiveness with the proposition of attributing more value to the time and money spent by consumers, the provision of a service aimed at citizens to improve their understanding of the public space and reinforce democracy, and the articulation of the idea of quality with the idea of business, highlighting that quality sells and can be a worthwhile investment. Accordingly, they propose six dimensions for research into quality in journalism: sources of information, multimedia companies and groups, conditions and characteristics of the journalism profession, journalistic production, technologies, audiences and communication and information policies.

A decade later, the different perspectives on what constitutes quality journalism have been revisited, with different agendas and backgrounds of scholars and professionals interested in the topic. While the academic literature examines the quality of journalism from the production and product side, Lacy and Rosenstiel (2015) propose the demand approach, which assesses content attributes based on how well they meet an individual's information needs and desires. Ultimately, the quality assessment would be based on the individual's motive for accessing and consuming journalism, which may differ depending on their information interests and psychological needs.

As such, combining the demand and product approaches can generate new ways of understanding the quality of journalism. Whereas the demand approach assesses the quality of journalism based on consumers' perceptions of how well journalism meets their needs and wants, the product approach assumes that there are inherent

characteristics of messages that can be changed to improve the quality of the content (Lacy & Rosenstiel, 2015).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research methodology is quantitative, using a bibliometric study and content analysis. The content analysis aims to describe the evolution of academic production on the relationship between journalism and quality. Specifically, it seeks to outline the features of scientific production and the impact of research on quality journalism. This study will be combined with a bibliometric analysis to identify trends in this field of research.

The quantitative content analysis is descriptive, and the data was extracted from Scopus (the bibliometric analysis also uses the same database). The categories analysed are those covered by Scopus. This study analysed the following: the article's authorship, the authors' country of origin, the article's title, the year of publication, the journal's name, the journal's origin and the article's keywords.

Bibliometric analysis is a research method used to evaluate and quantify academic and scientific production in a specific field, aiming to understand trends, patterns and the influence of research in a given domain. In this case, the analysis is based on the model by Sharifi et al. (2021) and adapted to the needs of this research. There are two stages to the analysis: (a) creating the database and (b) analysing the data using Excel and VOSviewer. These stages can be divided into the following phases:

1. Identifying the database: the Scopus database was selected as the data source for this study because it is considered one of the most complete and up-to-date databases within scientific research.
2. Defining the search: an exhaustive and rigorous search was run using the keywords "journalism" and "quality", as well as Boolean operators such as "and", which are logical operators that connect words to broaden or narrow the results.
3. Selecting the articles: articles that met the inclusion criteria established for the study were selected, including research articles published in social sciences journals. The aim was to provide an evolutionary description of the subject, so articles published between 1936 and 2022 were researched.
4. Extracting data: the data was extracted according to the possibilities of Scopus, and descriptive data on the articles was recorded, such as title, authorship, journal, year of publication, keywords, abstract, citations received, academic affiliations and research funds, among others. With the data extracted from Scopus, two databases were created: one in Excel for the quantitative content analysis and another in CSV format (a file that divides the values by commas) to conduct the bibliometric analysis with VOSviewer.
5. Quantitative content analysis: a descriptive analysis of the data was undertaken to provide an overview of the selected articles' properties, such as the evolution of the publications over time, the articles' languages, the author's country of origin (first author), complemented by qualitative observations to understand the specific contribution of the authors who sign more than three articles indexed in Scopus, the main journals that publish on the subject and the publications' language of origin.
6. Bibliometric analysis (co-occurrences): VOSviewer was used to analyse the co-occurrence between words, or in other words, the occurrence of words or terms together extracted from the keywords of the articles in the sample. The aim was to determine how often the two topics were included together.

7. Interpreting the results: finally, the results obtained from the analyses conducted in Excel and VOSviewer were interpreted. It was possible to draw conclusions on the state of research into quality journalism, identify possible research gaps and establish areas for future research.

It is important to emphasise that “when using bibliometric indicators, ( ... ) indicators do not usually provide an exact measurement of the concept of interest, but can only provide approximate information” (Waltman & Noyons, 2018, p. 4).

The study sample comprises 971 research articles published between 1939 and 2022 and indexed in Scopus. As mentioned above, only research articles published in the social sciences, in any language, were considered.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Scientific production on quality and journalism in the field of social sciences has grown since 2006 (Figure 1). However, the growth is not uniform; there is no discernible pattern: some years show a lower number of articles in Scopus than the previous year; for example, in 2017, 63 research articles were indexed, while in 2018, there were 86, and in 2019, it fell 67.

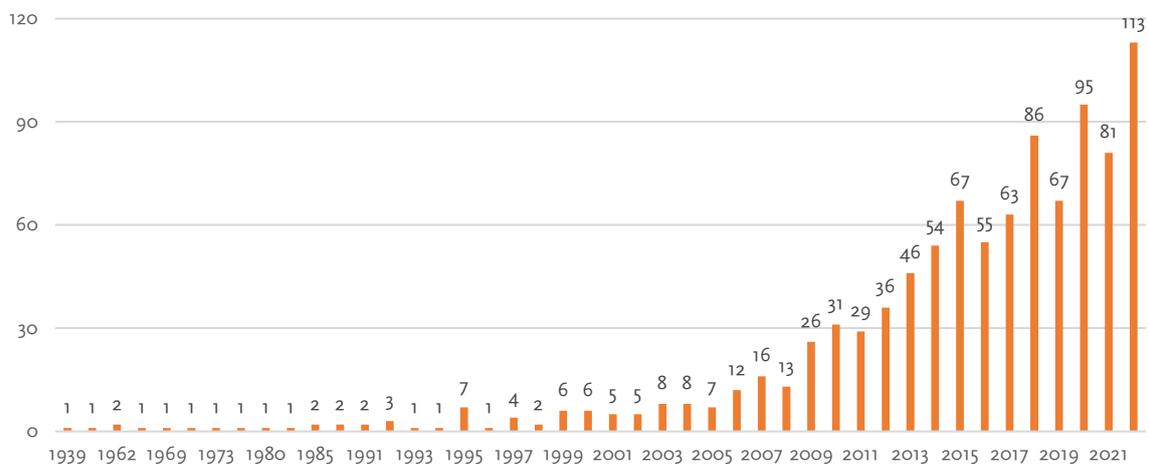


Figure 1. Evolution of the number of articles published on journalism and quality by year

The graph in Figure 1 shows the evolution of interest in the topic, which is a recent interest in the field of social sciences, considering the sample. About 39% of the registered publications are condensed into four years (2018, 2020, 2021 and 2022). It is worth noting that the highest number of publications identified per year on journalism and quality refers to the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study on journalistic quality is presumably related to the coverage of the coronavirus.

The articles are written in 25 languages, most of them Western: English, Spanish, Russian, German, Portuguese, French, Swedish, Chinese, Dutch, Hungarian, Croatian, Polish, Italian, Norwegian, Arabic, Lithuanian, Slovenian, Afrikaans, Finnish, Japanese, Latvian, Malay, Slovak, Turkish and Catalan. Some articles are also bilingual: in English and Spanish (0.9%), in English and French (0.1%) and in English and Portuguese (0.1%).

Table 1 shows the countries of origin (affiliation) of the first authors of the articles analysed (countries with 10 or more articles). To complement this data, we identified the authors who topped the rankings of published articles (authors with more than three articles) and noted qualitative and general observations about their scientific careers. The first detailed finding is that the United States has the highest number of first authors identified in the articles, representing 23% of the sample. Among this percentage, the scientific production of the scholar Jesse Abdenour (University of Oregon) stands out. His research interests analyse the production of quality information on non-fiction, its effective communication and the identification of solutions to maintain quality despite social crisis contexts. Secondly, the work of Scott Reinardy (University of Kansas), who has dedicated most of his research to studying the transformations in journalists' production routines following digital convergence and the various actions that the profession has faced despite precarious conditions. Lastly, Anya Schiffrin's (Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs) research on the media in Africa is a benchmark; she also published the book *Global Muckraking: 100 Years of Investigative Journalism From Around the World* (New Press) in 2018, which compiles a series of iconic investigative reports. Work by authors from the Spanish scientific community came in second place, with 18% of the top subscriptions. Within this community, the work of three scholars stands out: Manuel Goyanes (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid), Juan Carlos Suárez Villegas (Universidad de Sevilla) and Alba Córdoba-Cabús (Universidad de Málaga). Manuel Goyanes is a reference in analysing business models in the journalism sector; he is currently conducting studies to understand the motivations that lead readers to pay for information from online media. For his part, Juan Carlos Suárez Villegas deals with journalistic ethics, informational pluralism, accountability and journalism. Meanwhile, Alba Córdoba-Cabús conducted several research studies on disinformation and data journalism. Finally, from the United Kingdom, with 7%, we highlight the contribution of J. Lewis (Cardiff University) and his studies on politics, journalism, public opinion and audiences.

| COUNTRY         | NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| United States   | 224                    |
| Spain           | 175                    |
| United Kingdom  | 67                     |
| Germany         | 57                     |
| Australia       | 53                     |
| Russia          | 41                     |
| The Netherlands | 34                     |
| No data         | 27                     |
| Canada          | 18                     |
| Sweden          | 15                     |
| Finland         | 14                     |
| Denmark         | 12                     |
| Brazil          | 10                     |
| Colombia        | 10                     |

**Table 1.** Country of origin of the subscribing first authors (10 or more articles)

In total, 142 international journals published articles on journalism and quality from 1939 to 2022. Table 2 shows the 15 journals that publish the most. It should be noted that their scientific output represents 44% of the articles in this study's sample. Three Anglo-Saxon journals ranked in the top three regarding the highest number of published articles (*Journalism Studies*, *Journalism Practice* and *Journalism*).

| JOURNAL  | NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS |
|--|------------------------|
| <i>Journalism Studies</i>                          | 74                     |
| <i>Journalism Practice</i>                         | 55                     |
| <i>Journalism</i>                                  | 52                     |
| <i>Profesional de la Informacion</i>               | 42                     |
| <i>Estudios Sobre el Mensaje Periodistico</i>      | 38                     |
| <i>Digital Journalism</i>                          | 34                     |
| <i>Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly</i> | 22                     |
| <i>Australian Journalism Review</i>                | 18                     |
| <i>Revista Latina de Comunicacion Social</i>       | 16                     |
| <i>Journalism and Mass Communication Educator</i>  | 16                     |
| <i>Media and Communication</i>                     | 15                     |
| <i>International Journal of Communication</i>      | 13                     |
| <i>Pacific Journalism Review</i>                   | 10                     |
| <i>Comunicar</i>                                   | 10                     |
| <i>Communication and Society</i>                   | 10                     |

**Table 2.** Number of articles published per journal (10 or more articles)

*Journalism Studies* has been a prominent reference in journalism research for 23 years, covering theoretical, methodological, ethical, sociological and cultural perspectives. *Journalism* is another internationally relevant journal, launched in 2000, that publishes journalism studies from economic, political, and social approaches. Meanwhile, *Journalism Practice* has published studies on the nature of journalistic practices, their evolution, ethics and the impact of technological convergence for 16 years. On the other hand, five Spanish journals are included in this ranking of the journals that have published the most on quality and journalism in Scopus. Their articles account for 12% of the publications on the subject.

For a more in-depth analysis, the magazines that dealt the most with quality in journalism were grouped according to region and country. Furthermore, adding the category “year” from 2000 to 2022 provided an evolutionary analysis of this section. The period was chosen because it offered the most significant data on quality in journalism. As a result, the three clusters obtained were magazines of Portuguese, English and Spanish origin.

The graph in Figure 2 expresses the evolution of the journals’ clusters of origin. It shows that the greatest scientific production is concentrated in Anglo-Saxon journals, followed by Spanish and Portuguese journals. Anglo-Saxon journals have two major peaks, one in 2018 and the other in 2022. To contextualise the information, it is worth mentioning that in 2018, the United Kingdom exited the European Union (Brexit).

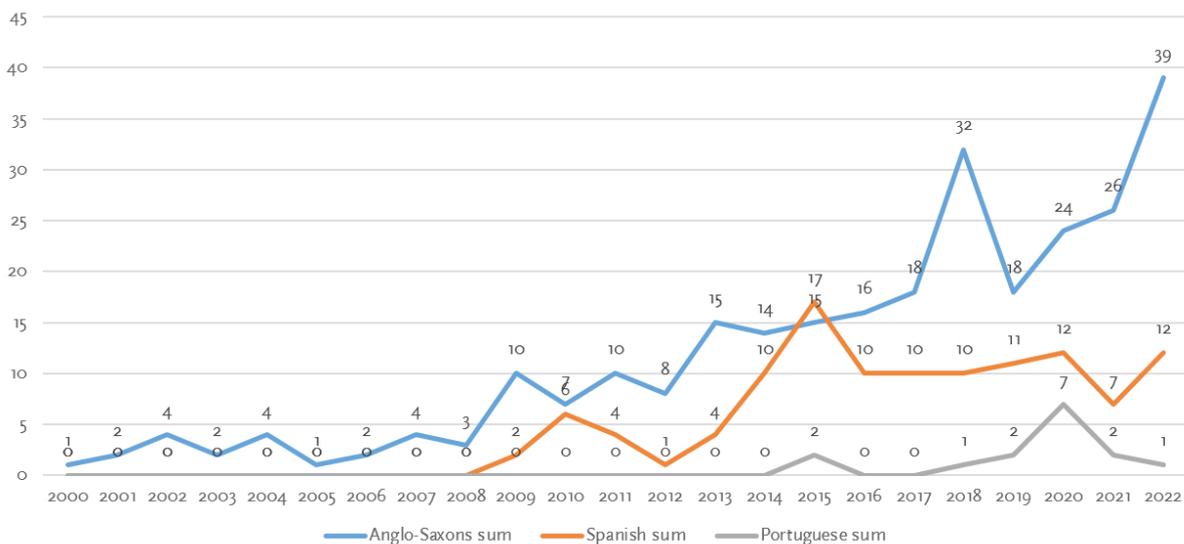


Figure 2. Number of articles published by journal origin

The Anglo-Saxon journal cluster has grown since 2020, coinciding with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, production in the Portuguese and Spanish clusters declined in 2021. The decrease persisted until 2022 for the Portuguese cluster, while the Spanish cluster experienced renewed growth during the same period.

Regarding the Portuguese cluster, the data stems from the findings of *Media and Communication*, an open-access journal operated by Cogitatio Press, exclusively published in English. In the case of the Spanish cluster, the data relies on publications originating from Spain, available in both Spanish and English.

Analysing the most frequent words in the keywords of the articles reveals a thematic focus on research connecting quality journalism and media-produced information, notably concerning human health, medical topics, and care-related issues (Table 3).

| TOPICS        | TOTAL |
|---------------|-------|
| Health        | 72    |
| Humans        | 70    |
| Medical       | 54    |
| Publication   | 50    |
| Research      | 42    |
| Media         | 39    |
| Information   | 38    |
| Quality       | 37    |
| Journalism    | 35    |
| Article       | 32    |
| Mass          | 31    |
| Analysis      | 31    |
| United        | 27    |
| Care          | 23    |
| State         | 22    |
| Social        | 21    |
| Public        | 20    |
| Education     | 19    |
| Controlling   | 18    |
| Pattern       | 15    |
| Paper         | 14    |
| Medicine      | 14    |
| Topic         | 13    |
| Literature    | 12    |
| Communication | 12    |
| Studying      | 11    |
| Learning      | 11    |
| Medium        | 10    |
| Disease       | 10    |
| Attitude      | 10    |

**Table 3.** Most frequent words in the keywords of the articles

To a smaller degree, the article keywords are related to education, learning, and exploring the role of journalism or mass media in fostering quality within the journalism sphere.



To gain deeper insight into the behaviour of keywords specifically associated with the term “journalism”, a dedicated Cluster 2 map was generated (Figure 4).

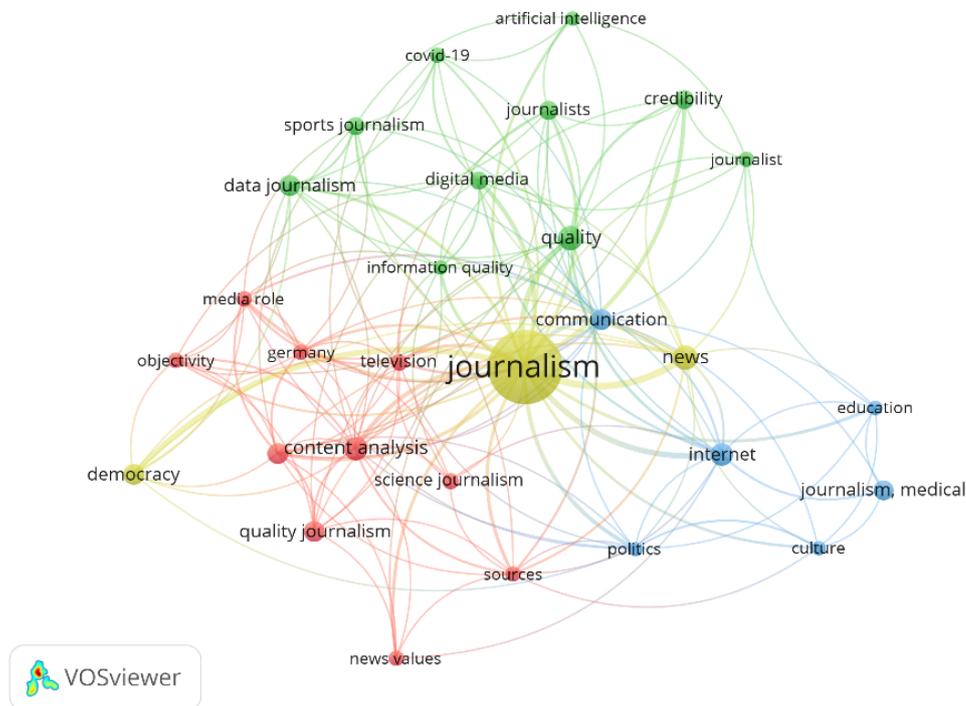


Figure 4. Co-occurrence analysis of the keywords included in Cluster 2

The map in Figure 4 depicts the relationships between the items and their significance (expressed by the thickness of the lines, as in the link between “journalism”, “democracy”, and “news”). Among the keywords associated with “quality” and “quality of information” (shown in green), the closest connections emerge with terms like “digital media”, “credibility”, “journalist”, “artificial intelligence”, “COVID-19”, “data journalism”, and “sports journalism”. This data suggests a noticeable trend in the scientific community’s interest in studying information quality in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring aspects like information quality concerning journalists and artificial intelligence.

The keywords “quality journalism” and “news value” (in red) are linked to “objectivity”, “media role”, “television”, “science journalism”, “sources”, “content analysis”, and “Germany”. In this case, the keywords are predominantly related to the quality of journalistic information from the mass media, such as television, news values and sources.

## 5. SYSTEMATISATION

The study underscores a remarkable evolution in academic production on journalism and quality, notably impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as highlighted by the prevalent occurrence of words like “health”, “humans”, and “medical” in the articles’ keywords (Table 3).

This research provides a quantitative analysis of the academic production indexed in Scopus on journalism and quality, covering the period from 1939 to 2022. The graphical representation (Figure 1) highlights a growing interest in this domain within the social sciences, particularly evident since 2006. However, the growth is not uniform, showing significant fluctuations over the years. In the year 2017, for example, the number of articles decreased, while between 2018 and 2022, it increased substantially, followed by a remarkable surge during the years coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic (2020, 2021, and 2022).

The prevalence of Anglo-Saxon journals and the correlation between journalistic quality and current events are prominent findings. However, the presence of Spanish authors serves as a notable counterbalance to this academic hegemony. The authors mentioned in the Spanish context stand out for the variety of approaches in their studies, encompassing deontological aspects of journalism, business models and disinformation.

Table 1 provides an overview of the geographical distribution of scientific production, prominently showcasing the United States as the frontrunner, trailed by Spain and the United Kingdom. Notably, the prevalence of articles in Western languages underscores the dominance of the Western scientific community in this field.

Finally, Table 2 outlines the most prolific journals in this domain, particularly emphasising Anglo-Saxon publications. This concentration is mirrored in the journal origin clusters (Figure 2), where Anglo-Saxon journals lead, followed by Spanish and Portuguese journals. A temporal analysis of these clusters highlights a consistent growth in Anglo-Saxon journals, especially after 2020, aligning with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bibliometric analysis delves deeper into these trends, highlighting particular thematic areas and relationships among keywords. This integrated approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the academic landscape around journalism and quality, laying a solid foundation for future research endeavours.

The same bibliometric analysis, now examined with the VOSviewer software, focuses on keyword co-occurrences and co-authorships by country. Figure 3 shows four primary clusters, spotlighting keywords such as “digital journalism”, “quality”, “content analysis”, “communication” and “quality journalism”. These clusters indicate key thematic areas within the field of study.

Figure 4, drawn from Cluster 2, looks closer at the relationship between specific keywords related to “quality”. Terms such as “digital media”, “credibility”, “data journalism”, and “COVID-19” stand out, indicating a significant correlation between quality studies and contemporary issues such as the pandemic.

The keywords “quality journalism” and “news quality” are linked with “objectivity”, “media role”, “television”, and “news values”, underscoring a focus on assessing the quality of journalistic information within the mass media. This bibliometric analysis complements the quantitative approach, providing additional insights into the trends and thematic connections in academic production on journalism and quality.

## 6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The quantitative findings show that scientific production related to quality and journalism is a relatively recent focus within the social sciences, with a surge observed from 2000 onwards, concentrating 44% of the published articles during this period. However, the growth is inconsistent, with some years displaying comparatively lower scientific production on this subject. The hegemony of production and citations on quality journalism in journals indexed by Scopus remains primarily with Anglo-Saxon countries, articles, and authors from the so-called “Global North”. Approximately 97% of the articles are originally published in English.

However, it is encouraging to note some mobility at the centre of the debate over the last 20 years, particularly in the cultural-linguistic axis of scientific output on the object of study, based on productions whose authors are not from English-speaking, Western or wealthy nations. In fact, the quantitative outcomes underscore the essential role of the Spanish scientific community in this scientific production, with 18% of the primary authors originating from Spain and 14% of the main journals that have published on the subject also being Spanish. In this sense, Spanish scientific contributions challenge, to a certain extent, the hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon approach.

Nearly half of the scientific production aligns with the publication standards and selection criteria of only 15 journals, representing a mere 10% of the total journals addressing this subject. At first glance, this concentration might suggest a poorly diversified panorama.

It is interesting to observe how the concept of “quality” aligns with the prevalent themes during the period when the collected articles were produced, such as the heightened interest observed between 2020 and 2022 (13% of the total sample) coinciding with the years of the COVID-19 pandemic. This observation is further substantiated by the thematic analysis of keywords, indicating a notable prevalence of the words “health”, “humans”, and “medical”. Additionally, the bibliometric analysis underscores the correlation between the keywords “quality” and “quality of information” with “COVID-19”, among other identified cases. However, this hypothesis requires further comprehensive and detailed research for validation.

In this way, it seems that there is no watertight definition of what the quality of journalism is, at least in the sample collected. Instead, there are dynamic definitions shaped by evolving demands and ongoing debates. Nevertheless, this dynamic definition remains anchored in the thematic debates prevalent within the journalistic field, such as the challenges of disinformation in the 2020s, the proliferation of digital communication during the 2010s and the methodologies and genres emerging and re-emerging in the field. Notably, researchers and professionals in this domain exhibit a persistent concern towards enhancing the quality of journalism, responding to changes in the craft and societal expectations throughout the analysed period.

Finally, this exploratory and descriptive analysis opens the way for more in-depth investigations, offering avenues to explore areas like the scientific profiles of the articles’ authors, affiliations with universities and identifying organisations supporting such research endeavours through grants or subsidies.

## 7. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This research serves as an exploratory analysis of scientific production on quality journalism. It intends to offer insights based on a bibliometric study, valuable for future studies in this domain.

However, certain limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. Although a widely recognised and comprehensive source, the choice of the Scopus database might introduce geographical and linguistic biases since it prioritises publications in English and may not fully cover relevant work in specific languages or regions insufficiently represented in the database. Additionally, the time frame from 1939 to 2022 may present a historical perspective, potentially excluding recent developments and emerging trends within journalism and quality, especially considering the rapid evolution of technology and journalistic practices.

The methodology used also presents challenges. Defining categories of analysis based on Scopus inclusions might limit the breadth of the research, excluding valuable contributions that may not fit exactly into these categories. Applying inclusion criteria, such as restricting articles to social science journals, may exclude relevant research from other disciplines that significantly contribute to understanding the topic. Moreover, while providing a quantitative view, reliance on bibliometric indicators may not fully encapsulate the complexity and depth of academic debates on journalism and quality.

The interpretation of the findings also has certain limitations. Despite rigorous analysis, interpreting complex data like bibliometric maps involves a level of subjectivity. The co-occurrences of keywords in clusters can be open to various interpretations, and different analysts might attribute different meanings to these relationships. Therefore, acknowledging these inherent limitations is crucial for a comprehensive assessment of the strength and applicability of the findings in this study concerning journalism and quality.

**Translation: Anabela Delgado**

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