

QUALITY INDICATORS OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS IN LEGAL PSYCHOLOGY

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

Introduction

Scientific publications are the main vehicles for the dissemination of science. The study and evaluation of such is reaching an important development in recent years in different areas or disciplines of science, because of the important role that they play within the framework of scientific research, as tools that are essential to the dissemination of science and that they furthermore enable the advancement of knowledge and achieve scientific excellence. Community requires a means of expression through which it records, transmits and exchanges experiences among its own members and those of other groups. Scientific culture cannot exist independently from scientific publications, but not all have the same prestige and degree of influence in the scientific community. Their recognition depends largely on their quality and their visibility (Osca-Lluch, 2012).

There is no doubt that not all journals have the same relevance as a means for the dissemination of the production of research. The limited visibility of scientific and technical publications, particularly of ones which are published in Spanish, affects researchers when they are evaluated in the area of their publications. Thus, in this context, there is a trend among institutions and agencies that evaluate the scientific production, to underestimate, if not ignore, the publications of the work in journals that are not included in international databases. For this reason, the willingness of authors to publish in a particular scientific journal, is influenced by the degree of international visibility of said journal, which in turn depends on

its presence in international bibliographic databases of prestige.

One of the ways to learn about the current state of the research and teaching activity of any institution or any scientific and professional profile, consists of the evaluation of the quality of the journals where its members are published, increasing its prestige according to the impact factor these possess, regardless of the level of excellence of the content of the published work.

The objective of this study is to know which journals of psychology, that publish works in legal psychology are currently included in Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases and offer an analysis of the indicators of quality of journals in these databases, with the purpose that researchers working in this discipline know the state of publications in their field of knowledge and so facilitate the best choice for publishing.

Method

In this work, from the journals included in the edition of the 2015 of the JCR and SJR, we have conducted a Bibliometric study on forensic psychology journals, which are contained in these databases, with the purpose of finding out which journals are better positioned within this discipline, the position as well as which countries lead the publishing of forensic psychology journals.

We conducted a search in the databases, selecting from each of them those journals that were classified into one of the categories of psychology and were moreover also classified in one of the following thematic categories: "Law", "Criminology & Penology" or that included the terms "Law", "Criminology", "Criminal", "Penology", "Forensic", "Legal" in the title of the publication or

the publishing institution. Information about the journals selected from these databases, was downloaded into a database, designed "ad hoc" for this study.

Results

The consultation of the different databases, in its edition published in the year 2016, resulted in a total of 30 journals. Distribution by database showed a very similar number of journals, JCR (SCI and SSCI) recovered 27 journals and SJR, 30.

For all selected journals, it should be noted that 27 of them circulate in the JCR and SJR databases, and that there are only three journals that are only included in the SJR, which are: American Journal of Forensic Psychology, Yearbook of forensic psychology and Journal of Forensic Practice.

When the country of origin of legal psychology journals included in JCR and SJR database is analyzed, we observed that these journals are published by eight countries. United Kingdom and United States are the countries that publish a greater number of publications, with 12 and 11 journals respectively. Other countries (Australia, Croatia, Slovenia, Spain, the Netherlands and Switzerland), only have 1 journal of forensic psychology in the JCR and, in the case of Spain, also one journal in the JRS.

Most of the forensic psychology journals publish their works in English (90 %, 27 journals). There are only four journals (10 %) which are also published in other languages. This is a case of a Spanish journal, which publishes in both English and Spanish, a Swiss one which publishes in French and, finally, a Croatian journal and another Slovenian, respectively published in Croatian and Slovenian.

Four groups of institutions publish legal psychology journals: The Commercial publishers, the Associations, Professional Associations and Scientific societies, Academic Institutions and Government agencies. Most of the journals are published by Commercial publishers (80 %) and Associations, Professional Associations and Scientific Associations (10 %).

The journals have been classified into 22 subject categories. In JCR, they have been classified in 10 theme categories and in SJR in 17. There are only five categories that are used by both the SJR and JCR databases for classifying the analysed journals, which are the following, *Law, Applied Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Social Psychology, and Social Work*. In tables 2 and 3, you can see the subject categories which have been classified in legal psychology journals in each of the databases. Criminology & Penology comes to the attention in the JCR by bringing together the largest number of journals, while in SJR database it is *Law, Pathology of Forensic Medicine and Psychology Applied* that bring together the largest number of journals.

The use of Bibliometric indicators, that quantify and analyse research through scientific publications is used increasingly often nowadays. Between the different indicators used, one which has a growing influence is the impact factor. Citation analysis and impact factor, define the criteria for agencies evaluation of journals, researchers, professors and researchers, scholars, universities, projects, research groups and doctoral programs.

Table 4 shows the relationship of legal psychology journals which are currently listed in the JCR or SJR in the 2015 Edition. Some of the journals of forensic psychology, which are classified in different categories in the two databases consulted, occupy the same position in both databases and in all the categories that they are included in. This happens in the case of the journals; *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, Journal of Criminal Justice, Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, Law and Human Behaviour, Trauma, Psychology Violence, Violence and Abuse and Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, which are classified in all thematic categories of the databases in quartile 1. However, it appears that the most common (24 journals), is for a journal, to occupy different positions and, therefore, a different quartile, depending on the subject category in which it has been classified.

Discussion

According to data obtained from 30 journals that meet the criteria in the consulted databases, 27 in JCR (SCI and SSCI) and 30 in JRS, only 3 of them are outside JCR (*American Journal of Forensic Psychology*, *Yearbook of forensic psychology and Journal of Forensic Practice*). Of 27 journals listed in the JCR, 11 of them are not classified in any of the thematic categories of psychology, which would not make them, in principle, attractive for legal and forensic psychologists, which would make 16 the potential number of targets for those who investigate and/or work in the field.

The journals of major attraction for researchers would with no doubt be: *Journal of Criminal Justice*; *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*; *Law and Human Behavior*; *Psychology of Violence*; *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*; and *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, classified in all thematic categories of the databases (JCR and SJR) in quartile 1. The *British Journal of Criminology* (Q1 in JCR and Q1 and Q2 in SJR) would also be highly recommended. However, the most frequent (24 of 30 journals), is for a journal to occupy different positions and, therefore, different quartile, depending on the subject category in which it had been classified.

From the total publications analysed, from the point of view of the evaluation criteria of the National Evaluator Commission of the Research Activity (CNEAI), only 18 Journals of forensic psychology, from the ones analyzed in this study, and from those included in the JCR, would be of use for the accreditation of Spanish re-

searchers. Journals that meet these requirements are: *British Journal of Criminology* (Q1), *Journal of Criminal Justice* (Q1), *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* (Q1), *Law and Human Behaviour* (Q1, Q1), *Psychology of Violence* (Q1, Q1, Q1), *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* (Q1, Q1, Q1), *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* (Q1), *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* (Q1, Q2), *Legal and Criminological Psychology* (Q1) (, Q1, Q2), *Sexual Abuse-A Journal of Research and Treatment* (Q2, Q1), *Behavioural Sciences and the Law* (Q2, Q3), *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* (Q2, Q3), *Criminal Justice and Behaviour* (Q2, Q3), *European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context* (Q2, Q3), *Homicide Studies* (Q2), *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* (Q2, Q3), *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (Q2, Q2 Q2) *Psychology, Crime & Law* (Q2, Q2, Q3).

Analysis of legal psychology journals demonstrates the existence of a discipline which, in Spain, it is getting more and more consolidated everyday but which needs to have more established journals, in order for them to be able to publish the results of their research in national journals of their specialty. Currently, the few options that specialists within the field have to publish papers in journals of their discipline to serve them to recognize their academic merits, contributes to these sending out and publishing their work to journals of general or multidisciplinary nature, which in turn contributes to subtracting visibility to the work and means their work will most likely pass unnoticed for the rest of specialists within the field, which they consult for their training or updating the bibliographic information in journals.