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DISCONTINUED REASONS OF JOURNALS IN SCOPUS: ANALYSIS AND REFLECTIONS

RAZONES DE DESCONTINUACIÓN DE REVISTAS EN SCOPUS: ANÁLISIS Y REFLEXIONES

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ABSTRACT

Aim of this article was to examine the reasons for journal discontinuation in Scopus and offers reflections on the subject. It highlights that over 60% of journals are excluded due to poor editorial practices, such as predatory behavior. Additionally, it is observed that most publishers are from Asia, Europe, and the United States. The study emphasizes that non-university journals account for a significant proportion of discontinued journals, being 11 times more likely to be discontinued compared to university journals. It is also noted that only 19.5% of university publishers are Ibero-American. In general, it is concluded that authors need to carefully evaluate the journals in which they intend to publish their research, and it is suggested that they opt for journals supported by university or government institutions for greater reliability and credibility. This study provides valuable insights for researchers and scholars seeking to publish in high-quality scientific journals and avoid those that do not meet adequate editorial standards.
KEYWORDS: scientific journals; discontinuity; scopus; metrics, evaluation

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo fue examinar los motivos de la discontinuación de la revista en Scopus y ofrecer reflexiones sobre el tema. Destaca que más del 60% de las revistas quedan excluidas debido a malas prácticas editoriales, como el comportamiento predatorio. Además, se observa que la mayoría de los editores son de Asia, Europa y Estados Unidos. El estudio destaca que las revistas no universitarias representan una proporción significativa de las revistas discontinuadas, teniendo 11 veces más probabilidades de ser discontinuadas en comparación con las revistas universitarias. También se observa que sólo el 19,5% de las editoriales universitarias son iberoamericanas . En general, se concluye que los autores necesitan evaluar cuidadosamente las revistas en las que pretenden publicar sus investigaciones, y se sugiere optar por revistas respaldadas por instituciones universitarias o gubernamentales para mayor confiabilidad y credibilidad. Este estudio proporciona información valiosa para investigadores y académicos que buscan publicar en revistas científicas de alta calidad y evitar aquellas que no cumplen con los estándares editoriales adecuados.
PALABRAS CLAVE: revistas científicas; descontinuidad; scopus; métrias, evaluación

Deep knowledge of the most important scientific information databases in the world is an important factor to consider before developing a thesis, project, or research article (Cañedo et al., 2015). Three of the most selective databases on the international scene are PubMed, Scopus - Elsevier, and Web of Science (WoS) – Clarivate (Ángeles Oviedo-García, 2021; Cañedo et al., 2015). Furthermore, these last two databases provide citation impact indicators for indexed journals: Scimago Journal Ranking (SJR) and Journal Citation Reports (JCR).

Although WoS (and JCR) is often considered the most prestigious and recognized database (Ángeles Oviedo-García, 2021), Scopus is undoubtedly the leader in terms of the number of journals, articles, and citations (Cortegiani et al., 2020). Additionally, Scopus has less anglo-saxon bias as it has broader coverage than WoS in non-English-speaking countries (Hernández-González et al., 2016; Martínez-Uribe, 2022). In countries like Colombia or Mexico, the admission and classification of national and international journals are partially determined by the best quartile achieved by the journal (Vasen & Vilchis, 2017). Although countries like Spain or Chile do not have categorization, they also consider Scopus and WoS (Montoya-Roncancio, 2020).

In the SJR, the journal's quartile depends on the number of citations and the prestige of the referring journals (Wilches Visbal et al., 2022). Since the SJR is based on Scopus data, when a journal is discontinued from Scopus, it loses its quartile. Scopus is a selective database that receives around 3,500 annual submissions, accepting approximately 25% of them. Currently, it includes around 28,000 active journals and nearly 300,000 books. The list of journals and books indexed in Scopus is updated 2 to 3 times per year (Scopus, 2023).

To ensure the quality of content, Scopus conducts an annual reevaluation of each journal based on four criteria (Scopus, 2023):

- *Metrics (MT)*: The journal shows insufficient performance that does not meet any of the three metrics (high self-citation rate, low citation count, and low CiteScore) compared to similar journals in the same field.
- *Publication concerns (PC)*: The Content Selection and Advisory Board (CSAB) identifies concerns or complaints about the quality standards of publications at the editor or journal level or receives them from the academic community.
- *Radar (RD)*: This is a data analysis algorithm that identifies outlier behavior in journals related to the number of published articles or inexplicable changes in geographical diversity or affiliations.
- *Continuous curation (CC)*: It executes an ongoing curation process in which the CSAB indicates if any journal deserves future evaluation under the same inclusion criteria in Scopus.

Therefore, it is worth investigating the main reasons for the discontinuation of journals in Scopus. To do this, the Excel document containing the list of discontinued journals in Scopus (as of March 2023) was downloaded (Elsevier, 2023).

It was observed that out of the 781 journals discontinued in Scopus since 2009, 675 (86%) were due to metrics and concerns related to publication quality, with the latter being the most common reason (Table 1).

Table 1. Reasons for discontinuation of indexed journals in Scopus, 2009 – 2023

Discontinued Reason	Frequency	%
Continuous curation	24	3.1
Metrics	167	21.4
Publication concerns	508	65.0
Radar	82	10.5

This indicates that over 60% of the journals are excluded due to poor editorial practices (such as predatory behavior (Cortegiani et al., 2020)) and that both the council and the community are vigilant about violations of publication ethics by the journal or the editor. Furthermore, it was observed that over 80% of the journals were discontinued in the last 7 years (2016-2023). This may be due to increasing concerns about the infiltration of predatory journals in Scopus since 2015 (Macháček & Srholec, 2022; Savina & Sterligov, 2016; Singh Chawla, 2021).

Regarding the Publishers, it was found that the majority come from Asia, Europe, and the United States. In all cases, the Discontinued Reason was publication concerns (PC) (Table 2). It is worth noting that even prestigious international publishers like Springer have had more than 10 discontinued journals.

Table 2. Publishers with the highest number of discontinued journals in Scopus, 2009-2023

Publisher	Location	Frequency (%)	Reason
Academic Journal Inc (https://inter-publishing.com/)	Estados Unidos	39 (5.0)	PC
World Scientific and Engineering Academy and Society (https://wseas.com/journals.php)	Bulgaria	31 (4.0)	PC
Asian Network for Scientific Information (https://www.ansinet.com/journals.php)	Pakistán	18 (2.3)	PC
Omics Publishing Group (https://www.omicsonline.org/omics-journals.php)	Estados Unidos y Canadá; Europa; Japón y Australia	17 (2.2)	PC
Medwell Journals (https://www.medwelljournals.com/home.php)	Pakistán	13 (1.7)	PC
Springer (https://link.springer.com/)	Suiza	12 (1.5)	PC
iMedPub (https://www.imedpub.com/)	Inglaterra	11 (1.4)	PC

All of these are not affiliated with university or government institutions.

According to the type of publisher, 8.2% are of university origin, while the remaining 91.8% come from associations, societies, institutes, or other types of publishers (Table 3). In both types of institutions, the main Discontinued Reason is publication concerns (PC).

Table 3. Publishers with at least one discontinued journal and the reason for discontinuation

Publisher		Discontinued Reason			
Type	Amount	CC	MT	PC	RD

University	41	5	5	26	5
Non-university	457	22	128	247	60
Total	498	27	133	273	65

From here, it can be concluded that it is 11 times more likely for journals from a non-university publisher to be discontinued. However, the proportion of university journals excluded due to publication concerns (PC) is slightly higher (63.4% vs. 54%). Out of the 41 university publishers, only 8 (19.5%) are Ibero-American. This means that it is 63 times less likely for a discontinued journal to be from a publisher in this region.

In general, there have been 21 discontinued Ibero-American journals so far, distributed among Spain (7), Argentina (4), Venezuela (3), Mexico (2), Cuba (2), Colombia (1), Chile (1), and Ecuador (1). The Ibero-American university publishers with journals excluded from Scopus due to publication concerns (PC) are Universidad de Salamanca (Spain), Universidad del Zulia (Venezuela), and Universidad Técnica de Manabí (Ecuador).

To summarize, the study's findings indicate that although Scopus has made progress in filtering out journals that fail to meet editorial quality standards, authors cannot disregard their responsibility of thoroughly assessing the journals they choose for publishing their research. Opting for university-affiliated or state-supported journals might provide greater reliability and credibility.

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