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Editorial: Trends in the classification of Colombian indexed journals in social sciences

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Editorial: Trends in the classification of Colombian indexed journals in social sciences

Editorial: Tendencias en la clasificación de revistas indexadas colombianas en ciencias sociales

Andres Eduardo Fernandez-Osorio

Editor Revista Científica General José María Córdova

Introduction

In recent years, the Administrative Department of Science, Technology, and Innovation's (Colciencias) national policy to improve the impact of national scientific publications has been a subject of academic debates in Colombian higher education institutions (HEI).

Two aspects have aroused this attention. The first aspect is Colciencias' concerning diagnosis of the low impact of articles and scientific journals in the National System of Competitiveness, Science, Technology, and Innovation (SNCCTeI), which encapsulates the following three indicators (Colciencias, 2016, p. 1):

- (i)* Colombian researchers publish mainly in low-impact journals;
- (ii)* Colombian scientific journals have a low presence in international indexes;
- (iii)* The publications of Colombian researchers and scientific journals have low impact in the international scientific community.

The second aspect, subjected to critical analysis, is the measures taken by Colciencias "to duplicate high-impact scientific production" (2016, p. 2). Among these measures are 1) The redesign of the national scientific journal classification model, which incorporates criteria that account for their visibility and impact; 2) The adjunct of an expert committee to Colciencias to permanently review the technical criteria defined for the classification model; 3) The implementation of activities led by Colciencias' to promote the conti-

nuous updating of the national scientific community in subjects related to bibliometrics and scientometrics; 4) The development of processes by Colciencias to promote the continuous updating of the editorial team of Colombian journals included in Publindex; 5) The design of a plan to strengthen Colombian journals classified in Publindex; 6) The adoption of a technological tool that will be made available to Colombian journals classified in Publindex; 7) The development of a new Publindex portal; 8) The stimulus by Colciencias encouraging the national scientific journals' institutions of provenance to fulfill their commitments by bolstering their resources and processes to guarantee the quality of content and good editorial practices; and 9) The implementation of the necessary changes in other instruments, mechanisms, and models used by the entity, to ensure the coherence of the policy and the articulation of efforts for the purposes expressed in the national policy to improve the impact of national scientific publications. (Colciencias, 2016, pp. 20-21).

These measures are based on the following:

- (i) Provision of mechanisms that encourage and help national researchers to publish their work in high-impact journals;
- (ii) Design and implementation of processes to measure the impact of scientific publications to align gradually with international standards;
- (iii) Creation of instruments to improve the visibility of national scientific journals;
- (iv) Strengthening of editorial work following the internationally accepted standards;
- (v) Promotion of the creation of inter-institutional editorial alliances. (Colciencias, 2016, p. 2)

Although the improvement of the quality in the research of Colombian HEI and the intellectual and scientific production of their researchers is an indisputable necessity, many reproaches have been prompted by the effects of the measures; for example, the results of the 830th Publindex Call to Index of Specialized Colombian Scientific Journals (Convocatoria 768 de 2016).

A total of 604 journals registered for this summons, 583 were endorsed to participate, and only 244 were ultimately included within the four categories established by Colciencias (A1, 1, B, and C). These results mean that only 41.85% of the scientific publications were endorsed by Colciencias for their editorial management and quality of content, evidencing a decline in the ranking of a significant number of journals in comparison to the results of past summons. In 2017, only one Colombian magazine was classified as A1, 14 as A2, 104 as B, and 125 as C (Colciencias, 2017, p. 11).

Upon the release of the final results of this summons, dissenting voices, such as Jácome Roca (2017), Díaz (2017), Alperin and Rozemblum (2017), Ochoa-Jaramillo (2017), Caballero-Uribe and Viloria-Doria (2018), Gómez Marín and Palacios (2018), and Flórez Carranza (2018) have expressed their reserve concerning the results of the

measurement, the methodology used and, above all, the future trends of ranking of the Colombian indexed journals. The main issue is that, following the recently closed 830th Call to Index of Specialized Colombian Scientific Journals, Publindex 2018 and the 2017 trend, many more scientific publications would drop in ranking or lose it altogether.

This concern intensifies given that the ranking obtained by the magazines “will be valid for two years, from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021” (Colciencias, 2018a, p. 12). In other words, a scientific publication obtaining an inimical classification will have to wait more than two years to modify it, which represents a major setback for publications and HEI that have limited editorial resources and support.

However, far from entering into a discussion of Colciencias’ Publindex scientific journal classification model’s¹ adequacy and its positive or aspects to be improved, which have already been discussed at length in other scenarios and publications, this editorial explores the possible trends of the results of the 830th call of 2018. To this end, a comparative analysis was made of the evolution of the *Revista Científica General José María Córdova* (Colombian Journal of Military and Strategic Studies), using a sample of 40 national journals of the broad area of Social Sciences, subdivided into two areas, Political Sciences, 5.F., (with a universe of 24 journals according to Publindex) and other Social Sciences, 5.I., (with a universe of 77 journals).

The journals and their data were selected based on the following two criteria: 1) Those included in Scopus’ Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJR) database and 2) the remaining journals to complete a sample of 20, according to the order presented in the Publindex database as of March 16, 2019². The data concerning indexes h³ and g⁴ were obtained through the Publish or Perish (PoP)⁵ program used by Publindex (Tables 1 and 2).

1 Based on the publications’ editorial management, visibility, and impact, with the purpose of increasing the quality of national scientific production and their insertion in the international field (Colciencias, 2018b) (Colciencias, 2018b).

2 Available at <https://scienti.colciencias.gov.co/publindex/CerrarSession.do?path=B>

3 Index by Hirsch (2010) to measure individual academic impact based on the quality and quantity of scientific research products according to the number of citations.

4 Index by Egghe (2006) to improve the h index by giving prominence to articles with a higher citation.

5 Open access program available at <https://harzing.com/resources/publish-or-perish>

Table 1. Analysis of the Publindex ranking of Colombian Political Science Journals (selection of 20 publications), 2015-2017

ISSN	Journal name	Social Science		H index		G index		SJR		2014 IBN Publindex II		2017 IBN Publindex II	
		Pop 2011- 2015	Pop 2012- 2016	Pop 2013- 2017	Pop 2014- 2015	Pop 2012- 2016	Pop 2013- 2017	SJR 2015	SJR 2016	SJR 2017	2014 Call	2016 Call	2016
0121-5051	Innovar	22	20	17	31	28	27	0.4	0.4	0.4	A1	A1	C
0121-5612	Colombia Internacional	15	15	14	24	23	22	0.3	0.3	0.3	A2	A2	B
0121-4705	Análisis Político	13	12	11	17	15	13	0.3	0.3	0.3	A2	A2	A1
0120-3584	Desarrollo y Sociedad	14	11	11	19	17	18	0.4	0.4	0.4	NC	NC	C
1794-5687	Co-Herencia	10	8	8	15	12	12	0.4	0.4	0.4	A2	A2	A2
1909-4450	Revista Republicana	3	3	3	8	8	8	-	-	-	A2	A2	C
0121-5167	Estudios Políticos	15	13	12	21	20	16	-	-	-	A2	A2	B
0122-4409	Papel Político	12	11	10	18	17	14	-	-	-	A2	A2	NC
1900-6586	Revista Científica General José María Córdoba	2	4	8	4	6	10	-	-	-	B	B	C
0120-3886	Revista de la Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Políticas	10	10	8	13	12	12	-	-	-	B	B	B
1692-1682	Derecho Penal Contemporáneo Revista Internacional	6	7	7	10	9	9	-	-	-	NC	NC	NC
0124-4035	Desafíos	4	6	6	7	9	11	-	-	-	A2	A2	C
0124-0781	Reflexión Política	9	7	6	14	13	10	-	-	-	B	B	B
1657-8651	Opera	5	5	5	7	7	6	-	-	-	B	B	NC
1909-3063	Revista de Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia y Seguridad	7	4	4	11	5	6	-	-	-	NC	NC	B
0120-3754	Administración & Desarrollo	7	4	3	13	4	4	-	-	-	C	C	NC
0123-1154	Revista Ibero-Latinoamericana de Seguros	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	B	B	NC
0120-4165	Controversia	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	C	C	NC
2027-2340	Revista de Negocios Internacionales	2	2	1	3	2	1	-	-	-	NC	NC	NC
0121-7151	Política	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	NC	NC	NC

Note: journals are arranged in descending h index order for 2017

Source: Created by the author, based on information in Publindex (2019), Scopus (2019), and Publish or Perish (PoP).

Table 2. Analysis of the Publindex ranking of Colombian Other Social Sciences Journals (selection of 20 publications), 2015-2017

Other Social Sciences	H index						G index			SJR			2014 IBN			2017 IBN		
	PoP 2011- 2015	PoP 2012- 2016	PoP 2013- 2017	PoP 2015	PoP 2011- 2016	PoP 2012- 2017	SJR 2013- 2017	SJR 2015	SJR 2016	SJR 2017	2014 Call	2016 Call	Publindex II	Publindex II	Publindex II			
0120-0534 Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología	33	30	22	54	50	40	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	A1	A1	A2					
0123-885X Revista de Estudios Sociales	23	20	17	33	31	27	Q3	Q3	Q3	Q3	A1	A1	B					
0121-5469 Revista Colombiana de Psicología	18	17	15	24	22	21	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4	A1	A1	C					
0121-4772 Cuadernos de Economía	15	15	13	21	21	17	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4	A2	A2	B					
1794-3108 Revista Criminalidad	14	13	13	26	26	25	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4	B	B	B					
0121-1617 Historia Crítica	14	10	9	18	14	12	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4	A1	A1	C					
2322-9381 Trashumante	5	5	5	7	7	7	Q4	Q3	Q4	Q4	C	C	A2					
1692-715X Rev. Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud	25	24	18	40	39	34	-	-	-	-	A2	A2	B					
1900-3803 Entramado	18	16	13	27	25	19	-	-	-	-	B	B	B					
2216-1201 Revista Colombiana de Ciencias Sociales	13	13	12	20	19	18	-	-	-	-	C	C	B					
2215-7360 Aglala	12	12	11	13	14	13	-	-	-	-	NC	NC	B					
0124-0021 Diálogos de Saberes Investig. en Derecho y Ciencias Sociales	10	9	8	27	17	16	-	-	-	-	C	C	C					
1900-6586 Revista Científica General José María Córdova	2	4	8	4	6	10	-	-	-	-	B	B	C					
2346-3279 En-Contexto	4	5	5	6	7	7	-	-	-	-	C	C	NC					
2382-5014 Revista Internacional de Cooperación y Desarrollo	5	24	5	8	39	8	-	-	-	-	NC	NC	C					
1794-3159 Poliantea	3	3	3	4	4	4	-	-	-	-	C	C	NC					
0121-8670 Revista Criterios	2	3	3	3	4	4	-	-	-	-	C	C	NC					
2215-9444 Arquetipo	3	3	2	4	4	3	-	-	-	-	C	C	NC					
2215-8812 Textos y Sentidos	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	C	C	NC					
2215-7190 Revista Análisis International (RAI)	2	2	1	4	4	2	-	-	-	-	C	C	NC					

Note: journals are arranged in descending h index order for 2017

Source: Created by the author, based on information in Publindex (2019), Scopus (2019), and Publish or Perish (PoP).

H index

Figures 1 and 2 show the h index tendencies of the 40 journals analyzed (20 in Political Science and 20 in other Social Sciences). In the case of Political Science (Figure 1), for 2013-2017 (analyzed during the 2018 830th call by Publindex), 45% of the journals dropped in h index in comparison to the interval of the previous summons (2012-2016), and 50% maintained the same h index. The *Revista Científica General José María Córdova* (hereafter RCGJMC), corresponding to the remaining 5%, had a 50% increase in its h index in comparison to 2016.

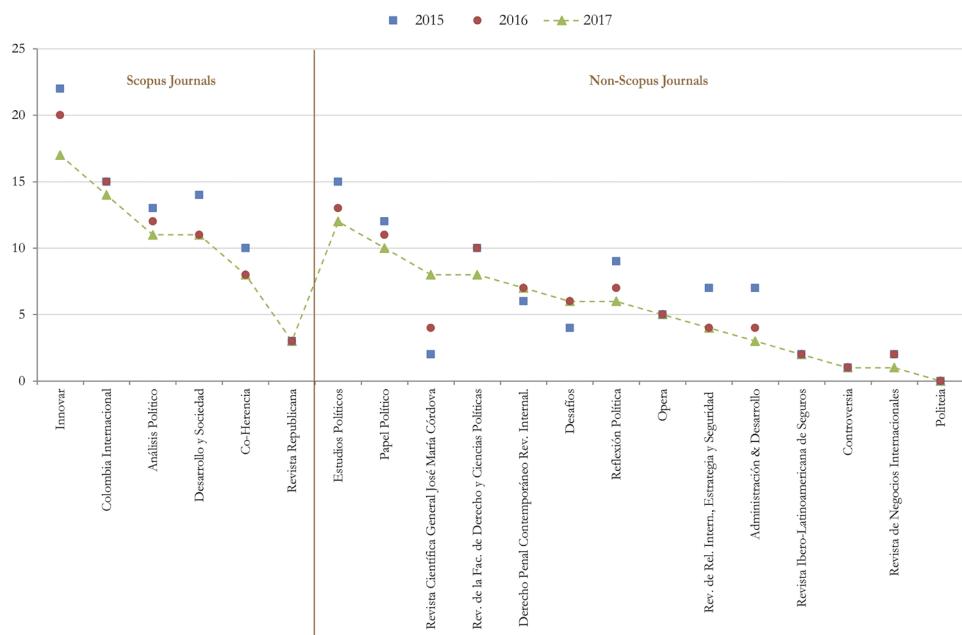


Figure 1. Evolution of the *h* index of 20 Colombian Political Science journals, 2015-2017.

Source: Created by the author, based on information in Publindex (2019), Scopus (2019), and Publish or Perish (PoP).

Regarding the Social Sciences (Figure 2), for 2013-2017, the h index of 65% of the journals dropped during the interval of the most recent call in comparison to the previous (2012-2016). Thirty percent of the journals maintained the same h index as in the previous interval. The RCGJMC, a part of the remaining 5%, had a 50% increase in its h index, compared to 2016.

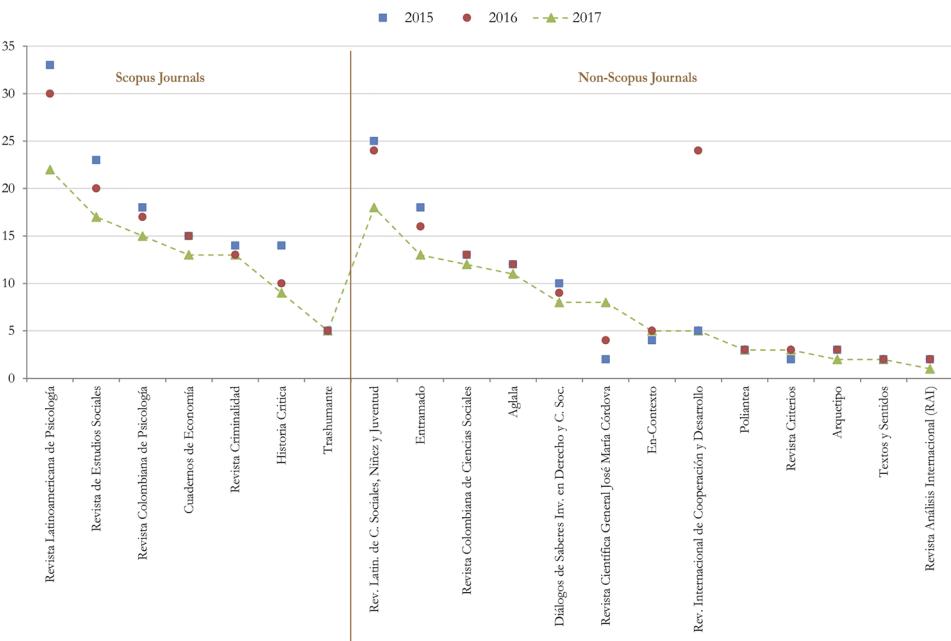


Figure 2. Evolution of the *h* index of 20 Colombian journals in other social sciences, 2015-2017.
Source: Created by the author, based on information in Publindex (2019), Scopus (2019), and Publish or Perish (PoP).

G Index

The trends of the g index of the 40 journals analyzed are detailed in Figures 3 and 4. During 2013-2017, 40% of the Political Science journals lowered their g index (Figure 3) during the period of the latest call, in comparison to the previous (2012-2016). Forty percent of the journals maintained the same g index as in the previous interval, and 20% increased. In this scenario, the *RCGJMC* had a 67% increase in its g index, compared to 2016.

Seventy percent of journals in other social sciences (Figure 4) registered a lower g index for 2013-2017 in comparison to the interval of the previous summons (2012-2016). Thirty percent of the journals maintained the same g index as in the previous interval. The *RCGJMC* increased its g index by 67% compared to 2016.

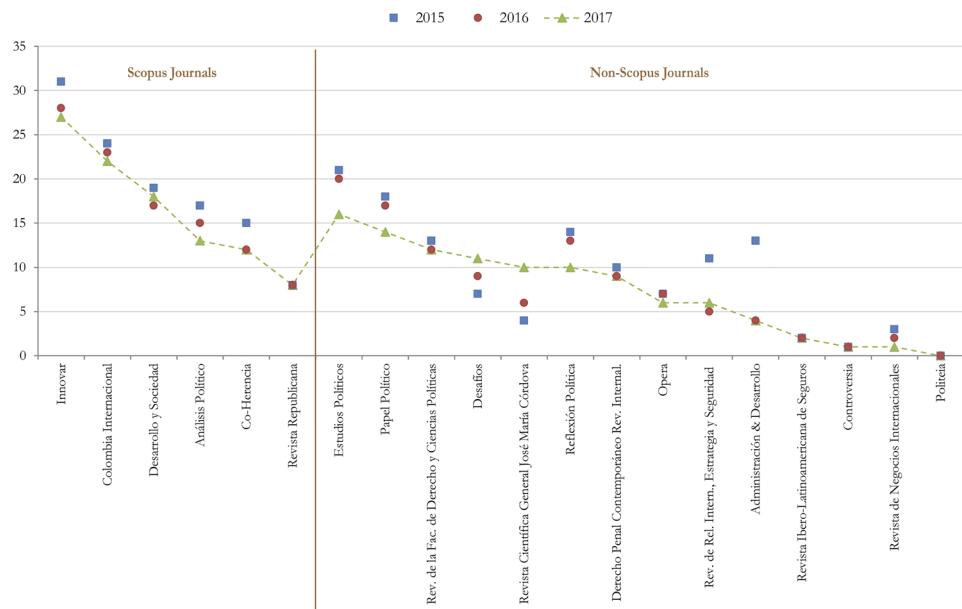


Figure 3. Evolution of the *g index* of 20 Colombian Political Science journals, 2015-2017.
Source: Created by the author, based on information in Publindex (2019), Scopus (2019), and Publish or Perish (PoP).

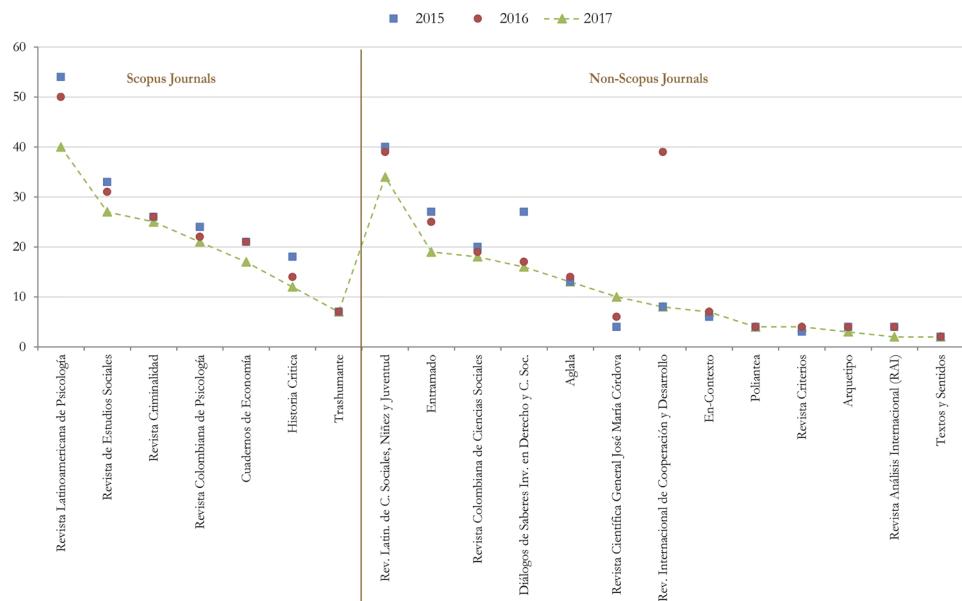


Figure 4. Evolution of the *g index* of 20 Colombian journals in other social sciences, 2015-2017.
Source: Created by the author, based on information in Publindex (2019), Scopus (2019), and Publish or Perish (PoP).

Publindex ranking

Of the Political Science journals analyzed (Figure 5), 55% lowered their 2016 Publindex ranking, compared to 2015; 30% maintained their ranking, and only 15% improved in the evaluation. In the area of other social sciences (Figure 6), for 2016, 65% descended in ranking (including a 30% that lost its ranking). Fifteen percent maintained the same ranking, and 20% improved their classification.

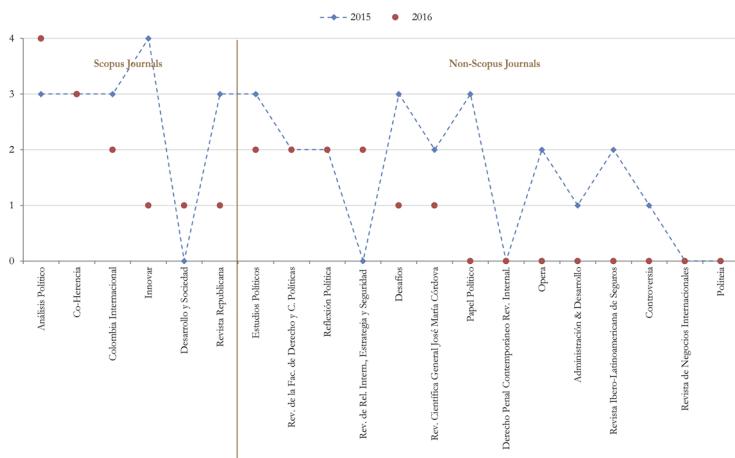


Figure 5. Evolution of the Publindex ranking of 20 Colombian Political Science journals, 2015-2017.

Source: Created by the author, based on information by Publindex (2019).

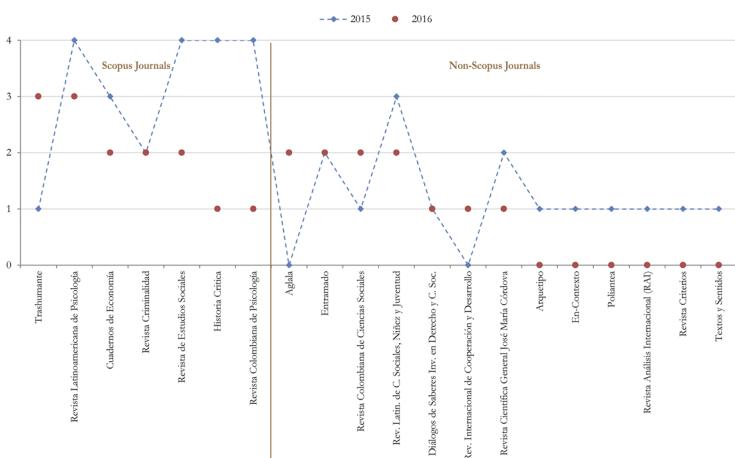


Figure 6. Evolution of the Publindex ranking of 20 Colombian journals in other social sciences, 2015-2017.

Source: Created by the author, based on information by Publindex (2019).

Final discussion

The results obtained in this exercise (conditioned to the results of 40 selected publications) suggest an uncertain scenario for the Colombian indexed journals should the same tendencies of the sample analyzed here prevail. For Political Science journals, the sample corresponds to 83% of the magazines in this area; for publications in other social sciences, the sample is equivalent to 26% classified by Publindex in 2016.

The challenges of Colombian scientific publications to achieve higher visibility and impact are not new and have been examined previously by others, such as (Miguel, 2011; Romero-Torres, Acosta-Moreno, & Tejada-Gómez, 2013; Ossa & Cudina, 2016; Pavas, 2016; Rubio-Romero, 2017; Aguilar Bustamante & Aguado López, 2018; and Fernández-Osorio & Martín Alvarado, 2018). However, HEI, editors, and editorial committees need new and improved strategies to increase the quality of the national scientific production and comply with the standards required by Colciencias; for example, straightforward and effective editorial processes; shorter response times in manuscript evaluation and publication; constructive and proactive appreciations of the articles; better periodicity in the edited numbers; attentive, efficient, and personalized communications with authors; as well as a better submittal guidance for the authors. These efforts imply a greater commitment by the academic community in carrying out their roles (author, evaluator, editor, and others) with the weightiness and ethical principles required.

It is also essential that journals maintain quality-related elements, such as the open access to content, involvement of non-endogenous expert peer reviewers, use of social and academic networks to disseminate contents, identification of authors using ORCID, use of plagiarism-prevention tools, meticulous review of article publication metadata, use of thesauri for keyword selection, use of DOI, continuous updating of web page information, use of repositories and indexing and summary systems (SIR), and the use of good ethics and quality practices, such as those established in the Declaración de San Francisco (DORA)⁶ or the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)⁷.

Finally, it is advisable to take into account other resources for publishers and authors, such as the Sci-Rev and Publons editorial management evaluation platforms that expose the authors' perspectives on journals (an element usually ignored in the editorial process) and provide valuable feedback to produce effective improvement plans. All this, without overlooking the publications' aesthetics and dynamism through striking and modern article layouts, attractive, dynamic, and updated web pages (OJS or other editorial management and file retrieval platforms). The readership (potential authors and reviewers from other latitudes), in addition to quality, demand multidisciplinary and rich content.

Thus, although it is imperative to maintain a constructive dialogue and critical attitude towards the policies established by Colciencias and scientific measurement systems,

⁶ Ver <https://sf.dora.org/>

⁷ Ver <https://publicationethics.org/about>

based strongly on profit, undoubtedly, the academic community is called upon to maintain and increase its quality criteria, look for alternatives and strategies to guarantee the impact, and do everything in its power to strengthen the national research system.

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