The Journals of the Emerging Sources Citation Index are Making Their Way: The New Landscape of Education and Educational Research Journals in the Unified Journal Impact Factor Ranking

Las revistas del Emerging Sources Citation Index se abren paso: El nuevo escenario de las revistas de Educación e Investigación Educativa en el ranking unificado del Journal Impact Factor

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Abstract
The "publish or perish" culture —which pressures researchers to publish more, faster, and in higher-impact journals to secure their careers and funding— has been a breeding ground for questionable publishing practices, such as predatory journals and the so-called "nefarious numbers", urging for a properly curated and reliable academic-scientific journal corpus, as well as for robust, transparent, and trustworthy bibliometric measures. To take its part, Clarivate, the owner of Web of Science, has implemented a series of editorial policy updates —including the extension of the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) calculation to the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) journals, and the posterior JIF ranking unification— which signify a milestone in the journal evaluation scenario. In this paper, we analyze the new landscape of the Education and Educational Research journals included in the JIF ranking of the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) 2023, making special focus on the impact of the integration of ESCI journals, of which the 11.22 % and 23.26 % have been positioned in the JIF Q1 and JIF Q2, respectively. In this way, we aim to help researchers, publishers, and funders in the field to evaluate —in terms of the JIF ranking— the quality journals included in the JCR 2023, besides the collection in which they are indexed, providing them with valuable insights for informed decision-making in terms of impactful research dissemination media, trustworthy research sources, editorial strategies, and research evaluation.
Keywords: Education and Educational Research journals, Journal Citation Reports (JCR), Journal Impact Factor (JIF), scientific journal evaluation, scientific publishing.

Resumen
La cultura del "*publish or perish*" (publica o perece), la cual presiona a los investigadores para que publiquen más, más rápido y en revistas de mayor impacto en pos de progresar en sus carreras y obtener financiación, ha sido el caldo de cultivo de malas prácticas editoriales, tales como las revistas depredadoras y los llamados "*nefarious numbers*" (números nefastos), poniendo de manifiesto la necesidad de contar con un corpus de revistas adecuadamente curado, así como con métricas robustas, transparentes y confiables, utilizadas dentro de un marco responsable. Para hacer frente a estas amenazas, Clarivate, el dueño de Web of Science, implementó una serie de actualizaciones en su política editorial, entre las cuales se destacan la extensión del cálculo del Journal Impact Factor (JIF) a las revistas de Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) y Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), así como la posterior unificación del ranking según el JIF. En este trabajo, analizamos

la nueva morfología de las revistas de la categoría Education and Educational Research (Educación e Investigación Educativa) incluidas en el ranking según el JIF del Journal Citation Reports (JCR) 2023, haciendo especial hincapié en el impacto que tuvo la integración de las revistas de ESCI, de las cuales el 11,22 % y 23,26 % se posicionaron en el JIF Q1 y JIF Q2, respectivamente. De este modo, se espera apoyar a los investigadores, editores y financiadores del área en la evaluación de las revistas de calidad incluidas en el JCR 2023 en términos del ranking según el JIF, más allá de la colección a la que pertenezcan, así como brindarles herramientas clave para la toma de decisión informada a la hora de seleccionar medios de difusión de impacto para publicar sus trabajos, consultar fuentes confiables de información, llevar a cabo estrategias editoriales y evaluar la ciencia.
Palabras clave: Evaluación de revistas científicas, Journal Citation Reports (JCR), Journal Impact Factor (JIF), revistas científicas de educación, publicación científica.

1. Introduction

The "publish or perish" culture pressures researchers, whose not only acknowledgement and funding, but also employment, promotion —and sometimes even annual salary (Quan et al., 2017)— depend on their scientific output, to increase their productivity (Amutuhaire, 2022; Frederick, 2020). Being publications —especially the ones in scientific-scholarly journals that have long established as the research dissemination medium par excellence— the main means of production considered for research evaluation, this has translated into a high number of journal articles (Amutuhaire, 2022; Frederick, 2020), favoring the quantity over the quality (Sarewitz, 2016), and growing the research output exponentially (Hanson et al., 2024). According to Hanson et al. (2024), two of the most prestigious and widely used databases of bibliographic references and citation, such as Web of Science (WoS)[1] and Scopus[2], indexed approximately 47 % more articles in 2022 than in 2016.

To host this unprecedented volume of articles, not only the number of available journals but also their size (i.e. the number of papers per journal) have increased (Thelwall and Sud, 2022). According to Thelwall and Sud (2022), the average number of articles per journal indexed in Scopus has tripled between 1980 and 2020. This growth was supported mainly by the online-publishing model and the fast-paced spread of mega-journals, which with a large scale and broad scope allow publishing technical soundness articles, regardless their novelty or relevance, in exchange for an article processing charge (APC) (Binfield, 2013; Spezi et al., 2017b). By 2020, mega-journals prevailed among the largest journals in Scopus, with all ten of the largest possibly being mega-journals (Thelwall and Sud, 2022).

The overwhelming journal offer challenges researchers when selecting where to publish their work. In general, they consider different aspects of a journal (either traditional or mega-journal), including peer-review, turnaround time, rejection rate, percentage of open access (OA) papers, and APC value (Sandesh y Wahrekar, 2017; Rowley et al., 2020).

[1] Web of Science (WoS) is a Clarivate's product consisting of a collection of multidisciplinary databases that contain bibliographic data, citations, and publication references (Clarivate, 2021c).

[2] Scopus (https://www.scopus.com/) is an Elsevier's multidisciplinary database of bibliographic references and citations.

Nevertheless, it is the "quality seal" that a publisher offers to the authors —which is usually perceived as a legitimizing driver of the published articles— what makes a journal more appealing (Bohorquez et al., 2024; Hanson et al., 2024). This seal is tightly related to the journals' indexation in databases considered as "whitelist" of journals, such as Scopus and WoS; and particularly associated with their position in journal rankings, such as the SCImago Journal Rank (published by SCImago LAB [SCImago, n.d.], based on the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) index [Guerrero-Bote and Moya-Anegón, 2012]) and the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) (Garfield, 2006) one, published in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) (Clarivate, 2021b) by Clarivate[3] (Hanson et al., 2024; Bohorquez et al., 2024). In fact, different examples can be found in the literature about journals that have lost great amounts of submissions because of being delisted from a mainstream database, such as WoS (Parodi, 2024), or a drop in their journal-level metrics —specifically, in their JIF (Schloss and Cuomo, 2023).

This competitive ecosystem, where researchers need to publish as many articles as possible and publishers want to attract as many of them as they can, has been the breeding ground for questionable publishing practices. On the one hand, predatory journals and publishers have flourished (Grudniewicz et al., 2019). Predatory practices prey on researchers that are urged to publish more and faster, and charge APCs —prioritizing self-interest at the expense of scholarship— for publishing "express articles" without proper (if any) peer review (Boukacem-Zeghmouri, 2023; Frandsen, 2022; Mertkan et al., 2021; Mills and Inouye, 2021). In addition, since researchers not only have to publish more and faster, but also in higher-impact journals, what Arnold and Fowler (2011) call "nefarious numbers" have also emerged. The nefarious numbers refer to unethical editorial strategies, such as JIF manipulation, to artificially inflate journal-level metrics toward "improving" journals' image.

These behaviors undermine research integrity, posing several challenges to the different scientific actors. On the one hand, researchers struggle not only to select a reliable and impactful media for research dissemination, but also to find well-grounded sources of relevant information to base their research. On the other hand, many publishers, especially small ones from emerging economies and those based on diamond-OA principles, remain "invisible" and face unfair competence. Finally, funders lack solid data for research evaluation. In this scenario, the scientific community is urged for a properly curated, reliable academic-scientific journal corpus more than ever before, as well as for robust, transparent, and trustworthy bibliometric measures used within the responsible research evaluation environment promoted by declarations like the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)[4], the Leiden Manifesto (Hicks et al., 2015), and the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)[5] (Torres-Salinas et al., 2024).

According to Quaderi (2023b), "the responsibility for protecting the integrity of the scholarly record is shared by all those involved in the creation, delivery, and assessment

[3] Clarivate (https://clarivate.com/) is a leader provider of enriched data, insights, and analytics; workflow solutions; and expert services in different areas, such as academia and government, intellectual property, and life sciences and healthcare. It offers several products, such as the WoS database, the Journal Citation Reports (JCR), and the bibliometric suite InCites.

[4] https://sfdora.org/read/

[5] https://coara.eu/

of academic literature." In this line, Clarivate, the owner of WoS, has taken a series of actions to counter the threats to the integrity of its scientific corpus and provide a trustworthy source of journal intelligence. On the one hand, its periodically quality re-evaluation of indexed journals has been reinforced (Quaderi, 2023b). On the other hand, to enhance its inclusivity, transparency, and promote the responsible journal evaluation, it has implemented a series of editorial policy changes to the JCR (Clarivate, n.d.-b) — its main journal-level data product (Edmunds, 2024; Heaney, 2023; Quaderi, 2022, 2023b, 2023a, 2024; Szomszor, 2021). Among them, the extension of the JIF calculation to the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) journals, as well as the posterior JIF ranking unification, signify a milestone in the journal evaluation scenario (Edmunds, 2024; Heaney, 2023; Quaderi, 2022, 2023a, 2024).

Being WoS recognized as one of the most comprehensive research platforms of journal evaluation, Clarivate's editorial policy updates affect the whole research community, including researchers, publishers, and funders, that need precise, transparent, and methodologically sound journal evaluation tools, making it crucial to understand and analyze the new journal scenario. In this paper, we comprehensively evaluate the new landscape of the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 for the Education and Educational Research journals. In this way, we aim to provide researchers, publishers, and funders in the field with valuable tools to make evidence-informed decisions regarding the best-fit high-impact journals for their work, the most reliable sources of research information and data, editorial strategies, and research evaluation. In particular, since the journals in the Education and Educational Research WoS category are indexed in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and ESCI collections, we first explore how the inclusion of ESCI journals has changed the journals' distribution in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. Then, a geographical analysis is conducted to understand how the coverage of the 2023 JIF ranking has been extended, making special focus on the performance of journals from the Global South. Finally, we deepen the analysis at a country level, evaluating the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research category for the particular case of the Spanish journals.

In order to contextualize our proposal, Section 1.1 introduces the main editorial policy changes that Clarivate has implemented in the last years, whereas Section 1.2 discusses the role of ESCI journals in the social sciences' publishing landscape, making particular emphasis in the Education and Educational Research area. Finally, Section 1.3 summarizes the main research questions addressed in this paper and the main objectives of the study.

1.1. Clarivate's Proposal to Counter Scientific Publishing Threats

The WoS core collection includes four journal indexes: Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), SSCI, AHCI, and ESCI. Clarivate bases its journal curation process on three principles: objectivity, selectivity, and collection dynamics (Clarivate, n.d.-c). Journals that pass 24 quality criteria, which evaluate editorial rigor and best practices, are indexed in ESCI, whereas the ones that also fulfill four additional impact criteria, which primary evaluate citation activity, are indexed in SCIE, SSCI, and/or AHCI. While the latter, which are collectively referred to as Clarivate's flagship, have long established as prestigious journal indexes, ESCI was launched in 2015 mainly aimed at expanding WoS

coverage, including more research from the Global South, newly launched, niche, and OA journals (Clarivate, 2023b; Repiso and Torres-Salinas, 2016).

Traditionally, journals in the different indexes have been periodically re-evaluated to ensure that they are on the correct collection, as well as they still meet the quality selection criteria despite any changes the journal could have experienced, whether regarding its scope, editorial policy, editorial board, or even its ownership (Quaderi, 2023b). In particular, if ESCI journals gain impact, they are relocated in SSCI, SCIE, or AHCI; if SSCI, SCIE, or AHCI journals lose impact, they are moved to ESCI; and journals from any index that fail to meet the 24 quality criteria are removed from WoS (Clarivate, n.d.-c). Since 2022, the quality re-evaluation efforts have been redoubled, while the impact re-evaluation has been put on hold (Quaderi, 2023b). As a result, more than 500 journals were flagged at the start of 2023, being more than 50 of them delisted from WoS (Quaderi, 2023b; Repiso-Caballero and Delgado-Vázquez, 2023).

Until 2021, only SCIE and SSCI journals were included in the JCR, distinguishing from AHCI journals, which have a different publishing and citation behavior, and from ESCI ones, that "only" fulfill the 24 quality criteria. In 2021, a series of progressive updates seeking for more inclusivity and visibility of ESCI and AHCI journals began. First, a normalized citation metric, called Journal Citation Indicator (JCI) (Clarivate, 2021a), was presented as a complement of the traditionally used JIF (Szomszor, 2021), and calculated for the four journal indexes in the WoS core collection. The introduction of the JCI in 2021 not only allowed the interdisciplinary comparison of journals, but also included ESCI and AHCI journals in the JCR for the first time. In 2023, the calculation of the JIF was extended to ESCI and AHCI journals, in an attempt to boost their visibility (Quaderi, 2022; Heaney, 2023). As a result, near 9000 journals owned by more than 3000 publishers — many of them, small ones from emerging economies— received their JIF for the first time. Moreover, according to Quaderi (2022), an increase of the JIF calculation for an 8 % of gold-OA journals and, at least, 6 % of Global South[6] ones was estimated. Finally, although having a JIF since 2023, ESCI and AHCI journals were not ranked on its basis until 2024, when, for the sake of simplicity, the JIF ranking of each WoS category was unified (Edmunds, 2024; Heaney, 2024). That is to say, the JCR 2023 presents a unique JIF ranking for each category, including all its journals, regardless their index. This holds for 229 out of the 254 subject categories of WoS, since the journals of the 25 categories that contain AHCI-only journals have not been ranked according to the JIF, lacking JIF quartiles and percentiles, because of their particular citation dynamic (Edmunds, 2024; Heaney, 2024).

The described JCR updates have changed the landscape of the journals included in the JCR 2023, especially the ESCI and AHCI ones, which have not only been given a JIF for the first time in 2023, but also been included (with some exceptions in the case of AHCI-only category journals) in the unified JIF ranking in 2024. According to Quaderi (2023a), "giving all quality journals [including ESCI ones] a JIF will provide full transparency to each and every article and citation that has contributed to a journal's scholarly impact, helping to demonstrate its value to the research community." In addition, it will "help

[6] Here, Clarivate uses the United Nations (UN) definition of Global South countries available at http://www.fc-ssc.org/en/partnership_program/south_south_countries. For the sake of consistency, this is the definition adopted in this paper.

level the playing field for all of them [not only the ones that pass the four impact criteria] including OA journals, recently launched or niche journals, or journals with a regionally focused scope and those from the Global South" (Quaderi, 2023a). In this line, and in the current complex and corrupted journal ecosystem, it is crucial to understand how the inclusion of ESCI (and some AHCI) journals (Clarivate, 2023b) that, once relegated, are now part of the selective set of journals ranked according to the JIF, have changed the journal evaluation landscape. In this way, it is expected to provide researchers, publishers, and funders a comprehensive perspective to evaluate the quality journals that now hold Clarivate's main JCR seal —the JIF—, besides the collection in which they are indexed.

1.2. Emerging Sources Citation Index Journals and Social Sciences

Historically, publication habits of researchers in the social sciences have differed from the ones of other research areas (De Filippo and Gorraiz, 2020; De Filippo et al., 2020). On the one hand, their research may be locally, regionally, or nationally based and written in the vernacular. On the other hand, they used to publish their results in books or monographs, with little to no collaboration. Nevertheless, the pressure to publish —in high-impact journals— or perish, together with the increasing need for research internationalization, has progressively changed the social sciences' publishing dynamic. According to De Filippo et al. (2020), between 2000 and 2019, publications in SSCI have increased twice as much as those in the Science Citation Index (SCI), a subset of SCIE journals.

Since its launch, the ESCI index —whose coverage purposes are in line with those of the social sciences regarding, for instance, the regionally significant and non-English research—, has broadened the WoS coverage of social sciences and arts and humanities journals (De Filippo and Gorraiz, 2020). According to Edmunds (2024), the unification of the JIF rankings in the JCR 2023 has led to a larger average increase of SSCI subject categories than that of SCIE ones —around 85 % and 30 %, respectively— demonstrating this tendency. In this line, the impact of the JIF ranking unification on the social sciences categories' journals deserves especial attention.

1.2.1 Education and Educational Research Journals

There are 41 WoS categories classified into the Social Science, General group[7]. Among them, Education and Educational Research is the one that has more journals included in the JCR 2023, totaling 760, counting SSCI and ESCI ones. Moreover, it is the most widely represented category by ESCI journals, with 490. In this line, the Education and Educational Research category is a suitable case study to evaluate the impact of the inclusion of ESCI journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023.

In addition, according to Repiso et al. (2017), the education research community is avid of studies that evaluate the research dissemination media, as the long tradition of literature regarding educational journal bibliometric studies at a global (Zurita et al., 2016; Orbay et al., 2021; Haba-Osca et al., 2019), regional (Repiso et al., 2017), and national levels (Ruiz-Corbella et al., 2014; Machado et al., 2014; Estrada Molina et al., 2023), demonstrates. Zurita et al. (2016) studied the impact and influence of journals classified

[7] Data source: JCR 2023 (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home).

into seven educational research areas —Education Studies, Education and Scientific Disciplines, Education and Technology, Psychology & Education, Education Special, Professional Development of Teachers and Curriculum Studies, and Social Sciences Disciplines and Education— in the 1989-2013 period. Orbay et al. (2021) evaluated SSCI journals in the Education and Educational Research category based on their JIF value and quartiles, highlighting the impact of the international collaboration and the share of OA papers in the field between 2013 and 2018. Haba-Osca et al. (2019) evaluated journals in the Education and Educational Research, Special, Education, and Psychology Educational categories included in the JCR 2016 in terms of their JIF quartiles, country of origin, language of publication, and publisher. Repiso et al. (2017) analyzed the coverage of Ibero-American journals of education within the context of two WoS journal indexes: ESCI and SciELO Citation Index. Finally, Ruiz-Corbella et al. (2014), Machado et al. (2014), and Estrada Molina et al. (2023) focused on Spanish journals of education. Ruiz-Corbella et al. (2014) analyzed their evolution and internationalization, as well as the quality indicators of different indexing databases, including not only WoS and Scopus, but also Google Scholar and national ones. Machado et al. (2014) analyzed the Education and Educational Research journals included in the JCR 2012 in terms of citation, whereas Estrada Molina et al. (2023) analyzed the citation of Spanish journals of education indexed in Scopus (category: Social Sciences, subcategory: Education) based on the CiteScore[8] 2021.

1.3. Research Questions and Objectives

As already introduced, the main aim of this study is to analyze the new landscape of the Education and Educational Research journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, making especial focus on the impact of the inclusion of ESCI journals. In this way, we expect to help researchers, publishers, and funders in the field to comprehensively evaluate the quality journals included in the JCR 2023 in terms of the JIF ranking, besides their index, and give them valuable insights for informed decision-making in terms of impactful research dissemination media, trustworthy research sources, and reliable research data.

According to Edmunds (2024), considering that SSCI journals tend to have higher JIFs than ESCI ones (since they fulfill the four impact criteria evaluated by Clarivate), it would be expectable that, when integrating ESCI journals into the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, SSCI journals would be ranked mainly in the upper quartiles (JIF Q1 and JIF Q2), while ESCI ones would be ranked in the lower ones (JIF Q3 and JIF Q4). To evaluate the extent to which this holds in the case of the journals of the Education and Educational Research field, we analyze the journals' position in the unified JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research WoS category, taking into account the redistribution of SSCI journals and the positions that ESCI journals occupy. In this line, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What is the morphology of the unified JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Educational and Educational Research WoS category?
2. How have SSCI journals been redistributed across the JIF quartiles of the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023?

[8] https://www.elsevier.com/products/scopus/metrics/citescore

3. How have ESCI journals been incorporated into the JIF quartiles of the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023?

In addition, according to De Filippo et al. (2020), there is a growing need to assess journals within a countries' scientific system to understand their role. For instance, journal evaluation highly influences global university rankings (GURs), such as Shanghai, Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), and Times Higher Education (THE) ones, which are increasingly related not only to universities' prestige, but also to that of the whole countries' scientific system. In this line, as ESCI is characterized by a broader geographical journal coverage, we analyze the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 in terms of the journals' country of origin.

In particular, as one of the main reasons that Clarivate states for the extension of the JIF calculation to all the WoS quality journal collections —including ESCI (Quaderi, 2022; Heaney, 2023)— and their posterior incorporation into the JIF rankings (with the already mentioned AHCI-related exceptions) (Edmunds, 2024; Quaderi, 2024) is to enhance the visibility of journals from the Global South, we make special focus on their positioning in the new journal evaluation landscape. Moreover, within the context of Education and Educational Research, this analysis is of especial importance due to the key role that education plays in emerging economies (Repiso et al., 2017). In fact, it can shed light to the current challenging scenario that, on the one hand, requires conducting regionally relevant research that addresses local problems, but, on the other hand, leads researchers to shift their research objectives toward more globally focused ones to publish it in high-impact (usually foreign) journals (Repiso et al., 2017).

The geographical analysis provides a further dimension to consider in the researchers', publishers', and funders' decision-making process that is crucial within the educational research environment due to the key role that education plays in the development of a country. Understanding the performance of journals published in each region within the context of the leader ones —such as those ranked in the JIF ranking— can make researchers aware of quality local and regional dissemination media with a global projection, as well as set the basis toward promoting them, enhancing their visibility, improving their quality, and further evaluating their performance within a national or regional scenario.

Finally, we deepen the analysis at a country level, in particular, within the context of Spain. The rationale behind this choice is twofold. Spain, which ranks fifth in terms of the number of journals included in the JCR 2023 —below countries with a well-established editorial tradition, such as USA, England, Netherlands, and Germany—, is the third in terms of number of ESCI journals, only below USA and England[9]. Moreover, among the top 10 countries in terms of the number of journals included in the JCR 2023, it is the one with the highest percentage of ESCI journals with respect to its total number of journals. For instance, the 557 Spanish ESCI journals double the number of Swiss ESCI journals (the following country in the referred top 10), and outperform the whole journal portfolio of China Mainland (including ESCI journals and those in the flagship collections). In addition, not only the remarkable presence of Spanish journals in the ESCI collection has been previously highlighted in the literature (Ruiz-Pérez and Jiménez-

[9] Data source: JCR 2023 (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home).

Contreras, 2019), but it has also been studied within the context of the Education and Educational Research WoS category (Repiso et al., 2017). In fact, the Education and Educational Research is the WoS category with the higher number of Spanish journals (75) included in the JCR 2023[10], and has been the object of previous studies (Machado et al., 2014; Haba-Osca et al., 2019). In this scenario, including ESCI journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 supposes a milestone in the journal evaluation landscape of one of the most prolific —in terms of number of journals— areas (Education and Educational Research) of one of the most prolific —in terms of ESCI journals— countries (Spain), making it an attractive object of study to conclude the proposed analysis.

The objectives of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Analyze the new landscape of the journals in the Education and Educational Research WoS category in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023.
2. Study the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research WoS category in terms of the journals' country of origin. Make special focus on the performance of Global South countries.
3. Particularize the analysis in (1) within the context of the Spanish journals in the Education and Educational Research WoS category.

2. Methods and Materials

We conduct a bibliometric study to characterize the new landscape of WoS-indexed journals of the Education and Educational Research category in the unified JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. The targeted journals are the ones indexed in the Education and Educational Research WoS category that are included in the JCR 2023. The proposed analysis is mainly based on the journals' indexed collection, the JIF value, JIF quartiles, and JIF ranking. In addition, the country/region of origin of the journals and their publisher are also considered.

2.1 Preliminary Definitions

The JIF, introduced by Eugene Gardfield in the 1970s, is defined as the number of citations received in a given year by items published in a journal over the two previous years, divided by the total number of citable items (document type: articles and reviews) published in that journal over the two previous years (Garfield, 2006; Larivière and Sugimoto, 2019). The JIF 2023 is calculated as follows:

$$JIF_{2023} = \frac{Cites_{\text{2023 to items published in 2022}} + Cites_{\text{2023 to items published in 2021}}}{Citable\ items_{2022} + Citable\ items_{2021}}.$$

The JIF quartiles are defined as introduced in Table 1 (Clarivate, n.d.-a), being Q1 the highest and Q4 the lowest quartiles.

[10] Data source: JCR 2023 (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home).

Table 1
Clarivate's JIF quartiles definition

JIF Q	Range*
Q1	$0.0 < Z \leq 0.25$
Q2	$0.25 < Z \leq 0.5$
Q3	$0.5 < Z \leq 0.75$
Q4	$0.75 < Z$

* where Z = X/Y, being X the journal rank in the category and Y the number of journals in that category.

Source: Clarivate (n.d.-a).
Note. JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile.

2.2 Data Collection and Preprocessing

The JIF ranking data were obtained from the JCR (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home) on October 02, 2024 as follows. From the *journals* tab of the JCR, the categories' filter was set to "Education & Educational Research". A customized set of indicators was considered, including all the available features: default, impact, normalized, and source. The journal lists for two JCR years (JCR Year: 2022 and JCR Year: 2023) were exported. The first one, containing 269 journals, was downloaded as an Excel (.xlsx) file. The second one, which contained 760 journals, was downloaded as two separate Excel files since only the top 600 registers can be downloaded at once. The two files corresponding to the JCR 2023 were merged into a unique Excel file.

In order to include the country/region information in the JCR data, we resorted to InCites (https://incites.clarivate.com/), on October 02, 2024. InCites is a bibliometric suite distributed by Clarivate that operates based on the WoS collections (Clarivate, 2023a). The used InCites filter summary is as follows: Dataset - InCites Dataset + ESCI; Schema - Web of Science; Research Area: [EDUCATION & EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH]. Two datasets were downloaded, one for the data corresponding to 2023 (Time Period: [2023, 2023]) and the other for that of 2022 (Time Period: [2022, 2022]). To integrate the country/region data into the JCR 2022 and JCR 2023 journal lists, a two-step journal matching process was carried out. First, the ISSN or eISSN numbers of the journals retrieved from the JCR were used to identify corresponding journal records in the InCites files. Then, a title matching was performed to the ones that did not find a match in the first step.

Complementary data, including the number of journals and their corresponding indexes of the 41 categories classified into the Social Science, General group, as well as of the analyzed countries, were also downloaded from the JCR 2023 and/or JCR 2022, as required. In addition, the individual JCR 2023 report (or previous JCR editions) were consulted for different journals whenever it was required for the analysis. Finally, the list of Global South countries provided by the United Nations (UN)[11] was used throughout the study, whereas the gross domestic expenditure on research & development (GERD)

[11] http://www.fc-ssc.org/en/partnership_program/south_south_countries

as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) was retrieved from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)[12].

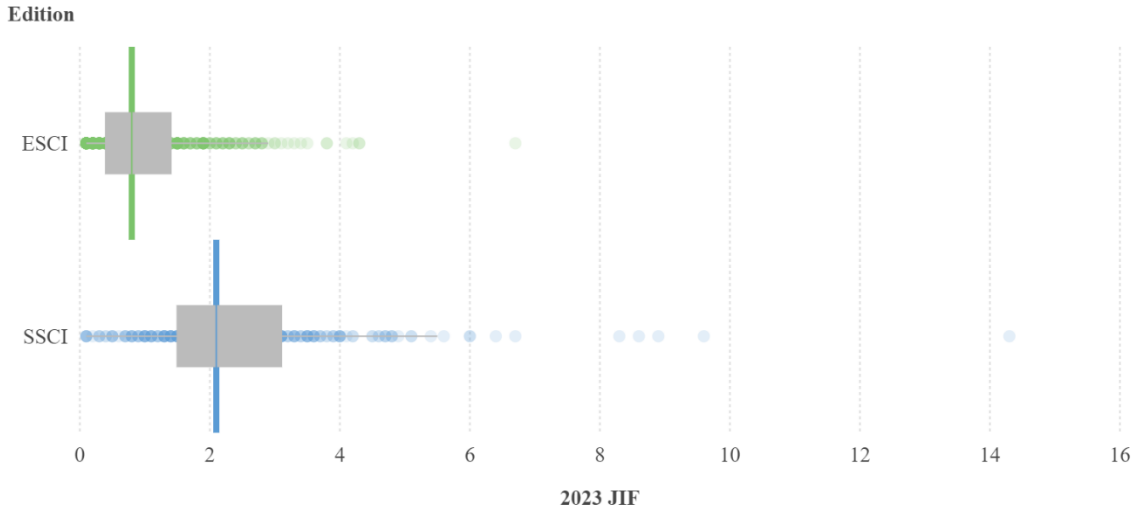
3. Results

The Education and Educational Research category contains SSCI and ESCI journals. While only the former were ranked according to the JIF in the JCR 2022, journals indexed in both of them are ranked in the JCR 2023. In particular, in the JCR 2023, the 490 ESCI journals are ranked together with the 270 SSCI ones, representing the 64.47 % of the total amount of journals in the category. Among the 41 WoS categories grouped by the Social Science, General classification, ESCI journals of the Education and Educational Research category are the ones that contribute the most to the category increase (closely followed by the Law category), with the average ESCI proportion in relation to the total number of journals in each of the 41 categories being 38.33 %.

Figure 1 shows the JIF 2023 values for the ESCI and SSCI journals. As suggested by Edmunds (2024), the former tend to be lower than the latter, having a median of 0.8 and 2.1, respectively. Taking into account the distribution of the JIF 2023 values shown in Figure 1 and the fact that the number of ESCI journals is 81.48 % higher than that of the SSCI index, the inclusion of ESCI journals into the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 shifts the total journal distribution downward on the JIF scale, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1

Distribution of the JIF 2023 values for the ESCI and SSCI journals in the Education & Educational Research category



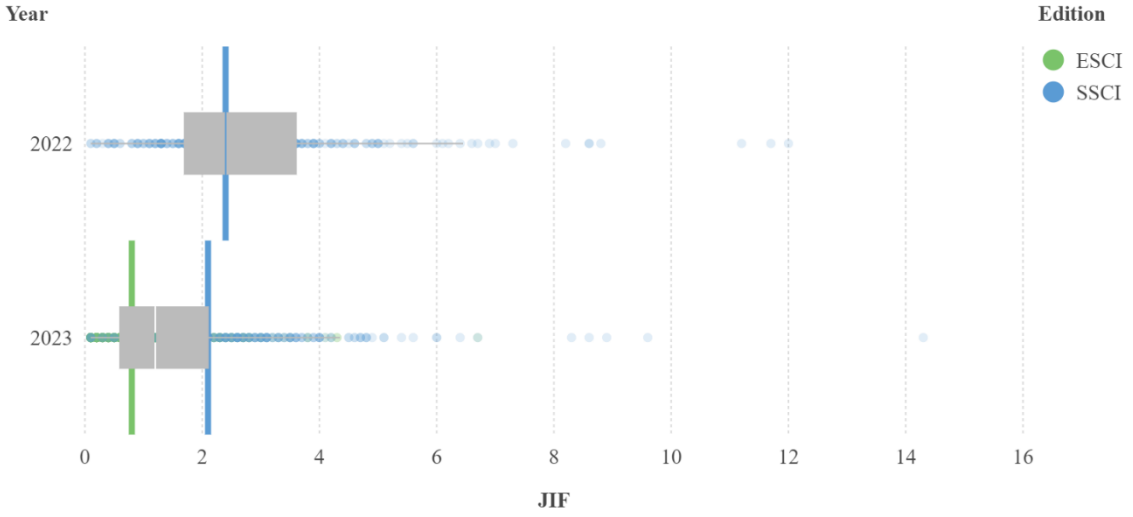
Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023 data (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home). Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).

Note. ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

[12] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data: https://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SCN_DS&lang=en#

Figure 2

Distribution of the JIF 2022 values (SSCI journals) and JIF 2023 values (SSCI and ESCI journals) in the Education & Educational Research category



Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023 and JCR 2022 data (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home). Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).
Note. The vertical lines show the 2022 JIF and 2023 JIF median corresponding to the SSCI journals (light blue), and the 2023 JIF median of the ESCI journals (green).
ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

According to the JIF quartiles published in the JCR 2022 and JCR 2023, the unified JIF ranking included in the latter have modified the JIF values associated with each JIF quartile as shown in Table 2. For instance, the JIF range corresponding to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 includes the full range of the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022. Then, in the JCR 2023, journals that would have ranked in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022 will be ranked in the JIF Q1. Similarly, the JIF range of the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2022 is contained in the JIF Q1 and JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023. In this sense, journals that would have ranked in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2022 will be able to rise to the JIF Q2, or even to the JIF Q1, of the JCR 2023. Finally, only journals with a JIF 2023 $\leq$ 0.5 will be placed in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2023, being in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023 those with 0.6 $\leq$ JIF 2023 $\leq$ 1.1, and in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023 the ones with 1.2 $\leq$ JIF 2023 $\leq$ 1.6, which would have ranked in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022.

According to Table 2, SSCI journals that were ranked in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022 (3.5 $\geq$ JIF $\geq$ 2.4) will be in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, even if their JIF 2023 drops to 2.1. In addition, SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2022 just need to maintain the value of their JIF 2022 in 2023 to, at least, rise to the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023, being even able to reach the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 (if their JIF 2023 is equal to or higher than 2.1). Finally, if SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 (JIF 2022 $\leq$ 1.6) maintain the value of their JIF 2022 in 2023, they can even rank in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023 (as long as they have a JIF 2023 $\geq$ 1.2). Only SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 that have a JIF 2023 equal to or less than 1.1 or 0.5 will be placed in the JIF Q3 or will remain in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2023, respectively.

Table 2
Range of JIF values corresponding to each of the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2022 and JCR 2023 of the Education & Educational Research category

JIF Q	JCR 2022	JCR 2023
Q1	12 ≥ JIF ≥ 3.6	14.3 ≥ JIF ≥ 2.1
Q2	3.5 ≥ JIF ≥ 2.4	2 ≥ JIF ≥ 1.2
Q3	2.3 ≥ JIF ≥ 1.7	1.1 ≥ JIF ≥ 0.6
Q4	JIF ≤1.6	JIF ≤0.5

Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023 and JCR 2022 data (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home).
Note. JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile.

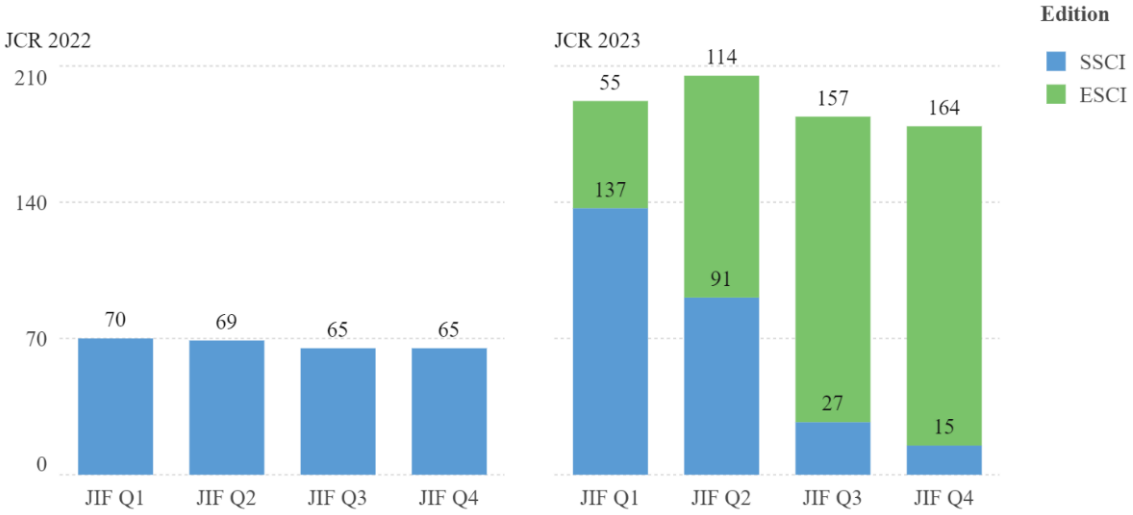
Figure 3 (right) shows the number of SSCI and ESCI journals included in each of the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023. In addition, the number of SSCI journals distributed across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2022 is depicted in Figure 3 (left)[13]. On the one hand, while there are 70 SSCI journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022, there are 67 more in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, resulting in 137 SSCI journals in the first quartile. This represents the 71.35 % of the journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. On the other hand, there are 91 SSCI journals in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023, which represents the 44.39 % of the journals in this quartile. Then, the 50.74 % of the SSCI journals are placed in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, and the 33.7 % are in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that the JIF quartiles have been tilted downward the JIF value scale, the 10 % and 5.55 % of the SSCI journals are still in the JIF Q3 and JIF Q4 of the JCR 2023, representing the 14.67 % and 8.38 % of each, respectively.

Figure 4 shows how SSCI journals previously ranked in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2022 have been redistributed across each JIF quartile of the JCR 2023, and how ESCI journals have been incorporated into them. It is important to note that the SSCI journal *Educational Leadership* (ISSN: 0013-1784) was not included in the JCR 2022, but has been reincorporated into the JCR 2023. Then, in order to appreciate its contribution to the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023, we show it separately in Figure 4. Figure 4 provides a closer look at the redistribution of the 269 SSCI journals ranked in the JCR 2022[14] across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023. As expected, and according to the shift experienced by the JIF ranges shown in Table 2, in the JCR 2023, most of SSCI journals have been repositioned in a higher quartile or have remained in the same one that they occupied in the JCR 2022. Moreover, there are cases where SSCI journals have risen two quartile positions (from the JIF Q3 2022 to the JIF Q1 2023 or from the JIF Q4 2022 to the JIF Q2 2023) and even three quartile positions (from the JIF Q4 2022 to the JIF Q1 2023).

[13] The number of journals in each Journal Impact Factor (JIF) quartile is not the same. This is due to the JIF value ties, which are more frequent since 2023, when the value of the JIF was truncated to one decimal place (Quaderi, 2022).
[14] There are 269 Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) journals ranked in the JCR 2022, whereas there are 270 of them ranked in the JCR 2023. The difference between the amount of SSCI journals in the JCR 2022 and the JCR 2023 is due to the fact that the SSCI journal *Educational Leadership* (ISSN: 0013-1784), which was not included in the JCR 2022, has been reincorporated into the JCR 2023.

Figure 3

Number of journals in each JIF quartile of the JCR 2022 (left) and the JCR 2023 (right) of the Education & Educational Research category



Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023 and JCR 2022 data (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home). Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).

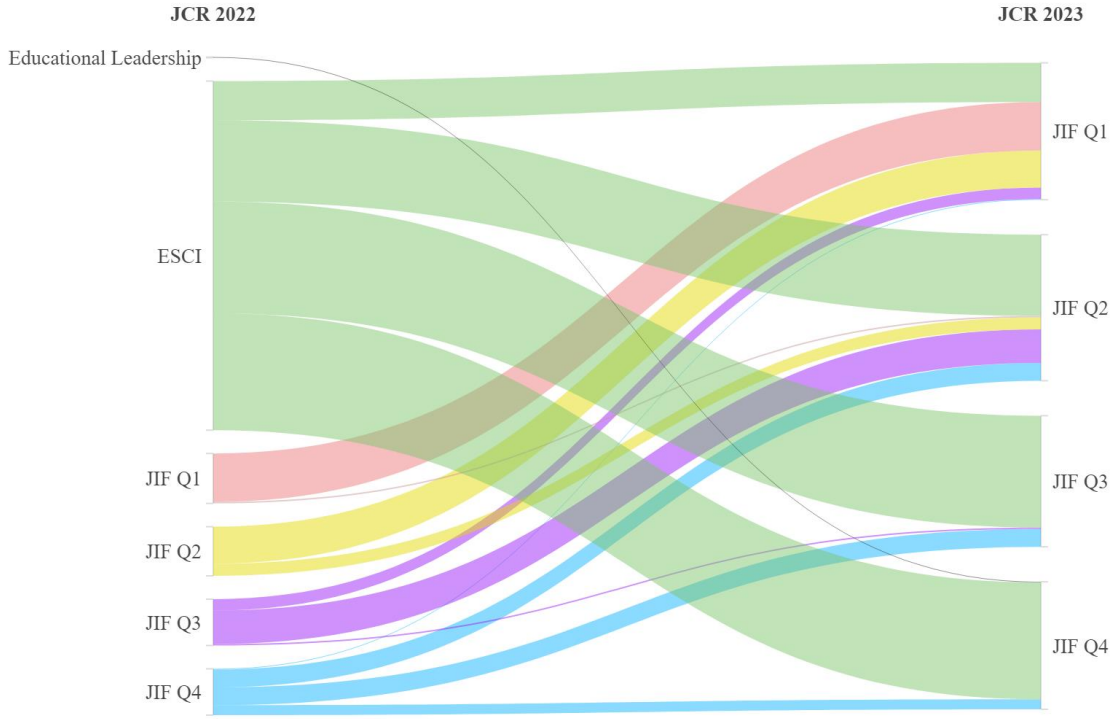
Note. ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

Among the 70 SSCI journals ranked in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022, the 97.14 % have remained in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, whereas the 2.86 % have descended to the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023. In order for the latter to occur, the two SSCI journals that have lost their position in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 —*Journal of Education for Teaching* (ISSN: 0260-7476) and *Journal of Professional Capital and Community* (ISSN: 2056-9548)— have reduced their JIF 2023 at least to 2 (see Table 2). On the one hand, the JIF 2023 of the *Journal of Education for Teaching* has dropped from 4 (JCR 2022) to 1.6 (JCR 2023). Previous JCR editions reveal that the *Journal of Education for Teaching* rose from the JIF Q3 in the JCR 2020 to the JIF Q1 in the JCR 2021, remaining in this quartile in the JCR 2022. This could be due to an increase of the citation to 2020 publications, which is included in the citation window utilized to calculate the JIF 2021 and JIF 2022. In particular, at the time the citation to the 2020 publications was used to compute these JIFs (2021 and 2022), it was more than twice the corresponding to the 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022 publications. Then, while the citations to the 2020 publications (together with the ones corresponding to the 2019 and 2021 publications) led the journal to the JIF Q1 (JCR 2021 and JCR 2022, respectively), the ones corresponding to 2018 and 2019 publications (used to calculate the JIF 2020) led the journal to the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2020, and the ones corresponding to the 2021 and 2022 publications (used to calculate the JIF 2023) led it to the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023. Similarly, the JIF 2023 of the *Journal of Professional Capital and Community* has dropped from 3.8 (JCR 2022) to 1.6 (JCR 2023). In this case, there is also a significant increase of the citation corresponding to 2020 publications. Finally, it is important to highlight that, if the ESCI journals had not been included in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, both SSCI journals could have lost even more quartile positions. Moreover, they could not only have come back to the JIF Q3 where they were

in the JCR 2020, but, if the JIF ranges corresponding to each JIF quartile had kept the JCR 2022 distribution, they would have fallen to the JIF Q4.

Figure 4

Final composition of the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023 of the Education & Educational Research category: Redistribution of the SSCI journals ranked in the JCR 2022, incorporation of the ESCI journals, and inclusion of the SSCI journal Educational Leadership[15]



Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023 and JCR 2022 data (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home). Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).

Note. ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

The 75.36 % of the 69 SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022 have been repositioned in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, whereas the rest (24.64 %) have remained in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023. In the latter case, the corresponding SSCI journals have reduced their JIF below 2.1, as in the case of the journals that were in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022 that have fallen to the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023. Among the 65 journals ranked in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2022, 24.61 % have been repositioned in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, 72.30 % in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023, and 3.09 % have remained in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023 (the latter have reduced their JIF 2023 below 1.2 [see Table 2]). Finally, the 1.53 % of the 65 journals ranked in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 have been repositioned in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, increasing the corresponding JIF 2023 above 2 (see Table

[15] It is important to note that Figure 4 shows the distribution of the journals across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023, but it does not take into account their actual positions within each JIF quartile. A detailed description of the journals' positions in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 is shown in Figure 5.

2). The 38.46 % of these 65 journals have been repositioned in the JIF Q2 and the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023, respectively, and the 21.55 % have remained in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2023.

In this way, 52 journals that were ranked in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022, 16 that were in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2022, and one that was in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022, have risen to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. In addition, 47 journals that were in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2022 and 25 that were in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 are placed in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023, whereas 25 journals that were in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 are in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023. In this sense, the JIF ranking unification signified an "upgrade" for 166 SSCI journals (61.71 % of the total of SSCI journals in the category). Moreover, 69 of them, the 25.65 % of the total SSCI journals in the category, have been upgraded to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. Among them, the *Journal of Educational Administration* (ISSN: 0957-8234) deserves to be highlighted, since it has moved from the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. According to Table 2, if the journal had maintained its JIF 2022 value in 2023, it could have upgraded up to the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023. Nevertheless, to reach the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, its JIF has increased above 2. Specifically, it has risen from 1.6 to 2.1 (around 31.25 %), positioning the journal in the lower limit of the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023.

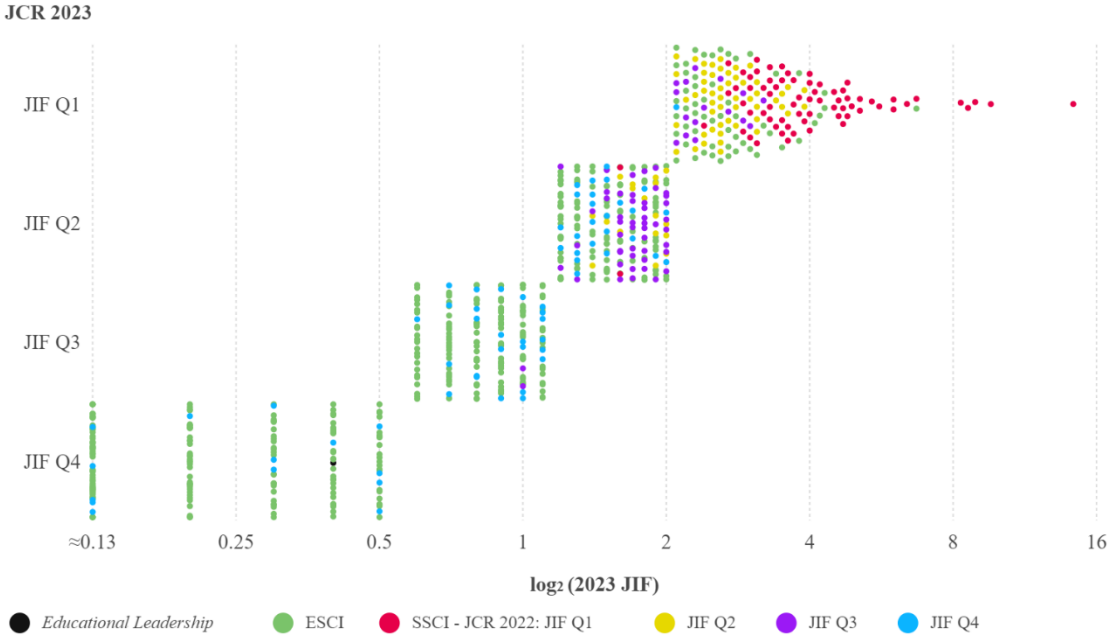
The conducted analysis shows that the 61.71 % of the SSCI journals have improved their JIF quartile position in the JCR 2023 with respect to their position in the JCR 2022. In particular, the 84.50 % of the SSCI journals are ranked in the upper JIF quartiles (JIF Q1 and JIF Q2) of the JCR 2023. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that, despite the downward shift of the JIF 2023 quartiles on the JIF 2023 scale, the 10 % of SSCI journals are in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023, whereas the 21.55 % of the SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 remain in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2023, being unable to achieve a JIF 2023 higher than 0.5. On the other hand, although as estimated in Edmunds (2024), the ESCI journals have been incorporated mainly into the lower JIF quartiles (JIF Q3 and JIF Q4) of the JCR 2023 (see Figure 3 [right] and Figure 4), corresponding to the 85.32 % and 91.62 % of each of them, respectively, their presence in the upper JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023 resulted in 28.64 % in the JIF Q1 and 55.60 % in the JIF Q2. In this way, the 34.48 % of the ESCI journals are positioned in the upper JIF quartiles (JIF Q1 and JIF Q2) of the JCR 2023.

Figure 5 shows the position of the SSCI and ESCI journals in the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023 in terms of their JIF 2023 value. For SSCI journals (except for *Educational Leadership* that was not included in the JCR 2022), the corresponding JIF quartile in the JCR 2022 is indicated. In general, the SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022 are the best positioned in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. In fact, the SSCI journals ranked in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022 that have been upgraded to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 are placed from the 38/760 rank position downward. Moreover, five ESCI journals outperform them: *Smart Learning Environments* (eISSN: 2196-7091), *Journal of Computers in Education* (ISSN: 2197-9987), *Journal of Teaching and Learning* (ISSN: 1492-1154), *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research* (ISSN: 2254-7339), and *Computers and Education Open* (ISSN: 2666-5573). Among them, the Singaporean journal *Smart Learning Environments* is the best-ranked ESCI one according to its JIF 2023 value, tying with the SSCI journal *British Journal of Educational Technology* (ISSN: 0007-1013) in the sixth (6/760) place (JIF 2023 = 6.7). The rest of the outstanding

ESCI journals rank in the following positions: 26/760, 26/760, 28/760, and 31/760, respectively. On the one hand, the Canadian *Journal of Teaching and Learning* and the German *Journal of Computers in Education* tie with a JIF 2023 = 4.3. The Spanish *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research* follows them with a JIF 2023 = 4.2, and the last one, the English *Computers and Education Open*, follows with a JIF 2023 = 4.1, demonstrating parity in terms of the JIF 2023.

Figure 5

ESCI and SSCI journal positions in each of the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023 of the Education & Educational Research category according to their JIF 2023 value[16]



Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023 and JCR 2022 data (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home). Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).
Note. ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

According to Edmunds (2024), the fact that some ESCI journals outperform some SSCI ones in terms of the JIF 2023 value is multifactorial. On the one hand, as Edmunds (2024) states, although the JIF value reflects some aspects of a journal impact (primary, the ones related to citation counts), a journal indexation in SSCI does not depend on the JIF value of a single point in time, being rather subjected to a broader sense of impact evaluated by means of the four quality criteria considered by Clarivate. Nevertheless, according to Clarivate (n.d.-c), until 2022, ESCI journals that had an estimated JIF that "would have placed" them in the JIF Q1 or JIF Q2 of its corresponding flagship category were re-evaluated for their inclusion in SSCI, SCIE, or AHCI. In this line, when the JIF calculation was actually extended to the ESCI and AHCI journals in the JCR 2022, the question regarding whether publishing it would made it explicit the need for re-evaluating

[16] For SSCI journals (except for *Educational Leadership*), the corresponding JIF quartile of the JCR 2022 is indicated (in colors).

some ESCI journals arose (Parodi, 2023). Moreover, the final integration of ESCI journals into the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, which allows the straightforward comparison between SSCI (or SCIE) and ESCI journals in terms of the JIF 2023, reinforces this question. In the case analyzed here, the JIF ranking unification demonstrates the good performance of, at least, the 34.48 % of ESCI journals that are positioned in the upper JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023 (JIF Q1 and JIF Q2). Unfortunately, as introduced in Section 1.1, in order to concentrate the efforts toward safeguarding the integrity and reliability of its content by removing journals that no longer meet the 24 quality criteria, Clarivate has put on hold the re-evaluation of ESCI journals for their promotion to any of WoS flagship collections since 2022.

3.1 Geographical Representation

Figure 6 shows the distribution of the SSCI journals of the Education and Educational Research category across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2022 (a) and JCR 2023 (b) according to their country/region of origin. The SSCI journals included in the JCR 2023 are from 19 countries. England and USA dominate the landscape, with 111 and 96 journals, respectively. Together, they concentrate the 76.66 % of the SSCI journals in the JCR 2023. Netherlands (22 journals) follows, with more than four times less journals than USA, but doubling the number of Spanish (10 journals) ones. Australia and Germany complete the top 5 countries in terms of the number of SSCI journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, with 7 journals each. Global South countries are represented by South Africa, with two journals; and Brazil, Mexico, Philippines, and Taiwan, with one journal each. Together, they count for only the 2.22 % of the SSCI journals of the category, publishing just twice as much journals as New Zealand (3 journals), and less than Germany and Australia (7 journals).

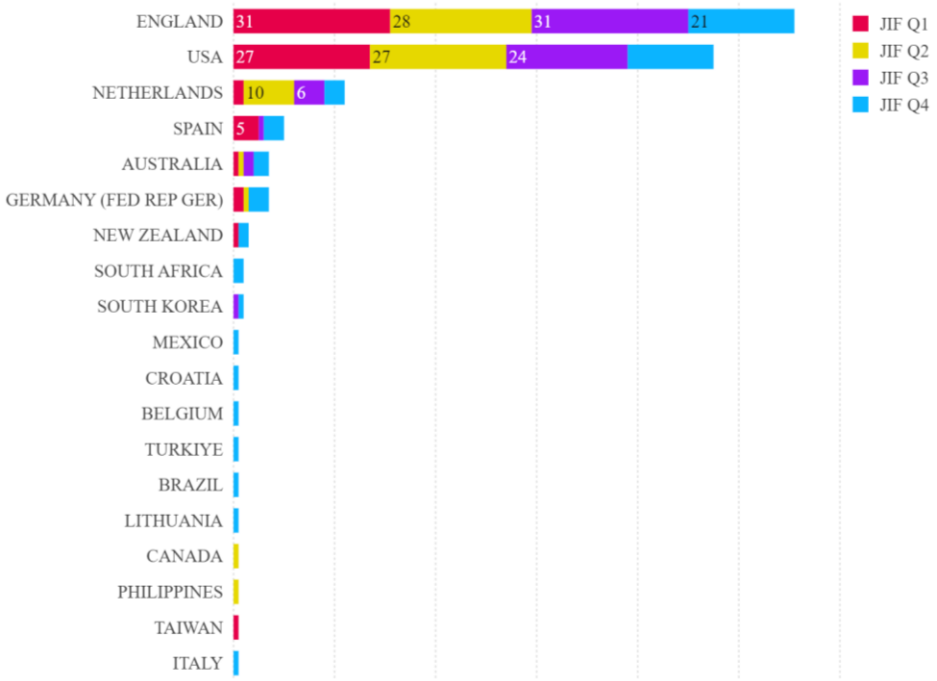
The JIF ranking unification favored SSCI journals from countries with a long and well-established editorial tradition, such as England and USA, which double (or nearly doubles in the case of USA) the amount of SSCI journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 with respect to the corresponding to the JCR 2022, keeping their supremacy. Here, the case of Netherlands outstands, since the presence of the Dutch SSCI journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 has grown six times. Moreover, in terms of the number of journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, Netherlands outperforms Spain, which was third in the JCR 2022 and has fallen to the fourth place in the JCR 2023.

Among the journals from the Global South, only the Taiwanese SSCI one was in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022 (JIF 2022 = 4), maintaining the same JIF quartile in the JCR 2023 (JIF 2023 = 4.6). In addition, the SSCI journal from Philippines has upgraded from the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022 (JIF 2022 = 3.3) to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 (JIF 2023 = 3.6). The case of Philippines is similar to the Canadian one, since both countries positioned their unique SSCI journal in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. Nevertheless, whereas the journal from Philippines has risen its JIF in 2023, and would have ranked in the JIF Q1 if the JIF range had been the same as in the JCR 2022, the Canadian SSCI journal has been benefited by the inclusion of the ESCI journals in the JIF ranking 2023 that shifted downward the JIF 2023 quartile distribution on the JIF 2023 scale, since it has upgraded one JIF quartile despite having reduced its JIF from 3.4 in 2022 to 2.5 in 2023.

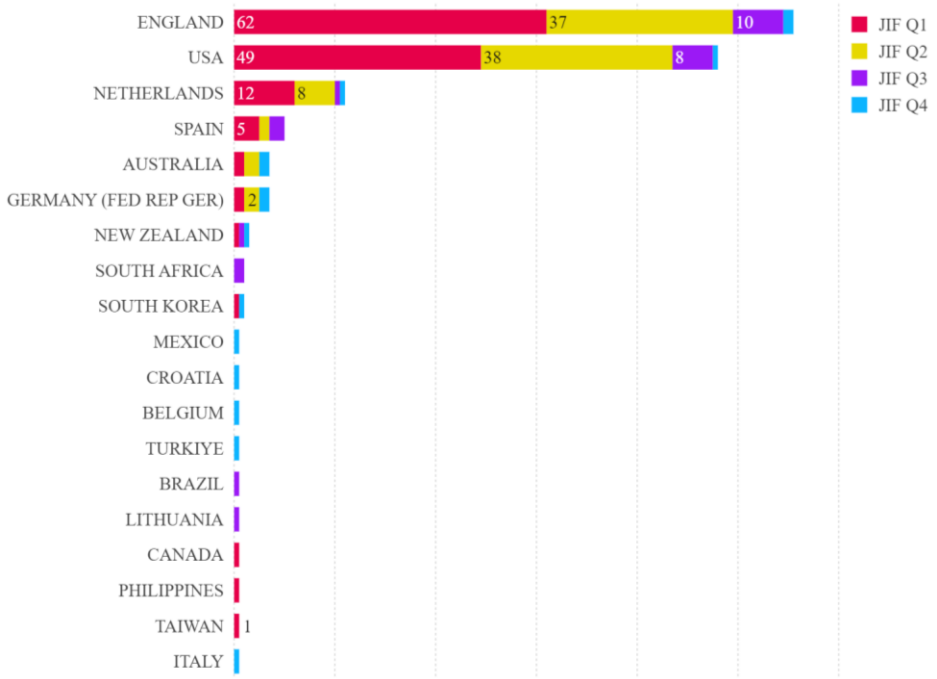
Figure 6

Number of SSCI journals of the Education & Educational Research category in each JIF quartile according to their country of origin

(a) *JCR 2022*



(b) *JCR 2023*



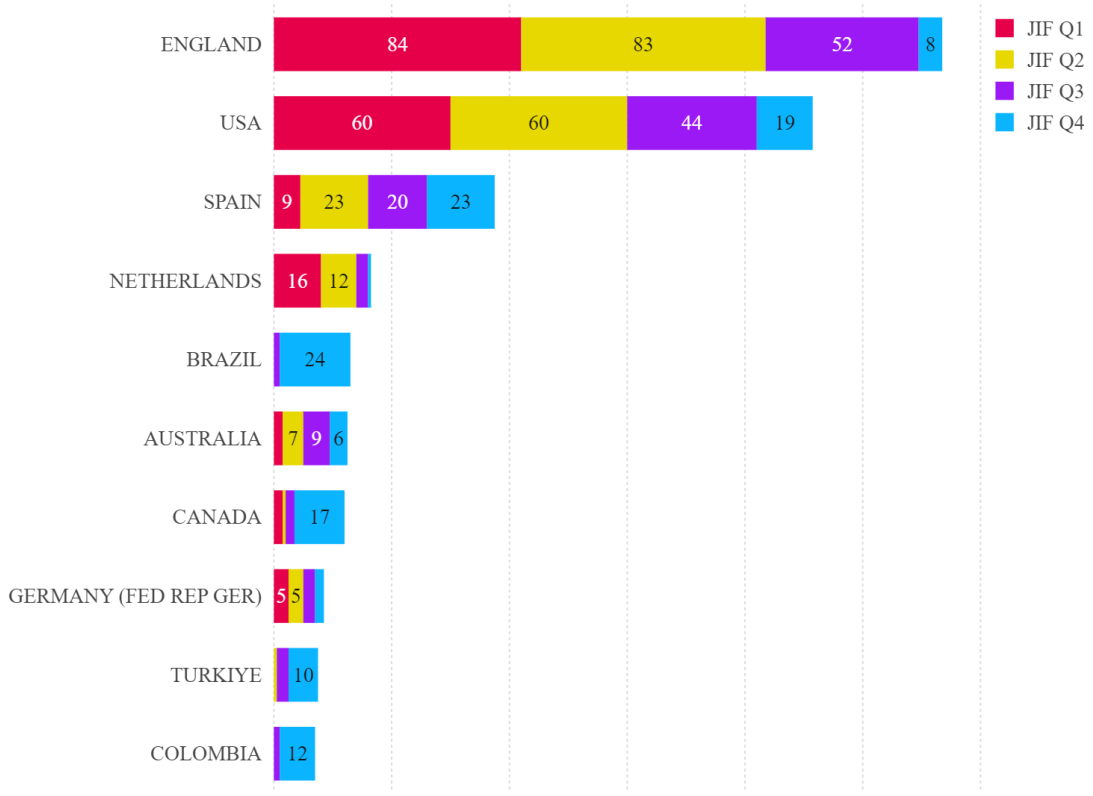
Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023, JCR 2022 (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home), and InCites (https://incites.clarivate.com/) data. Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).

Note. JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

While only 19 countries were represented in the JIF ranking of the Education and Educational Research category in the JCR 2022 —that is, the ones corresponding to the SSCI journals (Figure 6 [a])—, the inclusion of the ESCI journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 extends the geographical coverage to 52 countries/regions[17]. Figure 7 shows the distribution of the SSCI and ESCI journals across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023 of the top 10 countries in terms of the amount of journals after the JIF ranking unification. Although England (227 journals) and USA (183 journals) maintain their leadership in terms of the total number of journals —concentrating the 53.94 % of them—, compared to the 76.66 % that they perceive considering only SSCI journals, they have lost 29.63 % of the share of the JIF 2023 ranking of the category.

Figure 7

Top 10 of countries/regions in terms of the number of journals (including SSCI and ESCI ones) in the Education & Educational Research category: Distribution of the journals across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023



Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023 (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home) and InCites (https://incites.clarivate.com/) data. Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).
Note. ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

According to the results shown in Figure 7, the Spanish case deserves special attention. Spain was fourth when only the 10 SSCI journals were ranked based on the JIF in the

[17] Clarivate considers China Mainland and Hong Kong as two separate country/region records. For the sake of consistency, we consider them separately in the conducted analysis.

JCR 2022 (Figure 6 [a]). Nevertheless, by incorporating the 65 Spanish ESCI journals into the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, it has moved to the third place (75 journals, 10 SSCI and 65 ESCI ones), outperforming Netherlands —with 33 journals, 22 SSCI and 11 ESCI ones. Moreover, whereas Netherlands doubled the number of Spanish journals in the JIF ranking when only SSCI journals were considered (JCR 2022), Spain doubles the number of Dutch journals in the JIF ranking when ESCI journals are also considered (JCR 2023). In addition, Spain follows USA, which had 9.5 times more journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2022 than Spain[18], but has 2.44 times more journals in the JCR 2023 version. Here, it is important to highlight that among the top 4 countries in Figure 7 —England, USA, Netherlands, and Spain— the latter is the one that increases the most because of the inclusion of ESCI journals, representing Spanish ESCI journals the 86.66 % of the total of the Spanish journals that are ranked in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the category. On the other hand, England have increased 51.10 %; USA, 47.54 %; and Netherlands, 33.33 %.

Spain's third place in terms of the number of journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research category is in line with its remarkable amount of ESCI journals —representing the 76.19 % of the Spanish journals in the JCR 2023—, which is particularly notorious in the category, as has been previously discussed in the literature (Repiso et al., 2017; Ruiz-Pérez and Jiménez-Contreras, 2019). More importantly, most of the Spanish journals are published by research organizations —mainly universities—, followed by learned societies, being a little percentage of them published by for-profit publishers. This contrasts to Netherlands —the country that Spain has outperformed in terms of the number of journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023— whose journals are mostly published by commercial publishers, shedding light to the performance of the Spanish university publishers in the field of Education and Educational Research.

Finally, in terms of the number of journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, England and USA maintain their positions, being the increase greater due to the SSCI journals (Figure 6 [b]) than to the ESCI ones (Figure 7). In addition, although there are more Spanish journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 than Dutch ones, Netherlands —which has incorporated 14 journals into the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 (10 SSCI and 4 ESCI ones), going from two journals in the JCR 2022 to 16 in the JCR 2023)— outperforms Spain in terms of the amount of journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, which has gone from five journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022 to nine in the JCR 2023. Contrary to the case of England, USA, and Netherlands, despite the JIF 2023 quartile ranges have shifted downward on the scale of the JIF 2023 values, there are not new Spanish SSCI journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. Moreover, although they remain in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, three out of the five SSCI Spanish journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 have reduced their JIF: *Comunicar* (ISSN: 1134-3478), from JIF 2022 = 5.6 to JIF 2023 = 5.1; *RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia* (ISSN: 1138-2783), from JIF 2022 = 4.6 to JIF 2023 = 3.4; and *Educación XX1* (ISSN: 1139-613X), from JIF 2022 = 3.6 to JIF 2023 = 3.

[18] USA has 95 SSCI journals in the JCR 2022 of the Education and Educational Research category, whereas it has 96 SSCI journals in the JCR 2023. This difference is due to the inclusion of *Educational Leadership* in the JCR 2023, which has not been included in the JCR 2022.

3.1.1 Journals from the Global South

One of the main reasons that Clarivate states for the extension of the JIF calculation to all the quality journal collections of WoS —including ESCI (Quaderi, 2022; Heaney, 2023)— and their posterior incorporation into the JIF rankings (with the already mentioned exceptions) (Edmunds, 2024; Quaderi, 2024) is to enhance the visibility of newly launched, niche, and regionally focused journals and those from the Global South. Among the 52 countries/regions whose journals are ranked in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, 22 (42.30 %) are from the Global South, representing the 13.55 % of the journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. In this way, the Global South multiplies its JIF-ranking share by more than six with respect to the case of the JCR 2022. Moreover, two Global South countries —specifically, the Latin American Brazil and Colombia— have risen to the top 10 in terms of the number of journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, being positioned in the fifth and tenth place, respectively (see Figure 7).

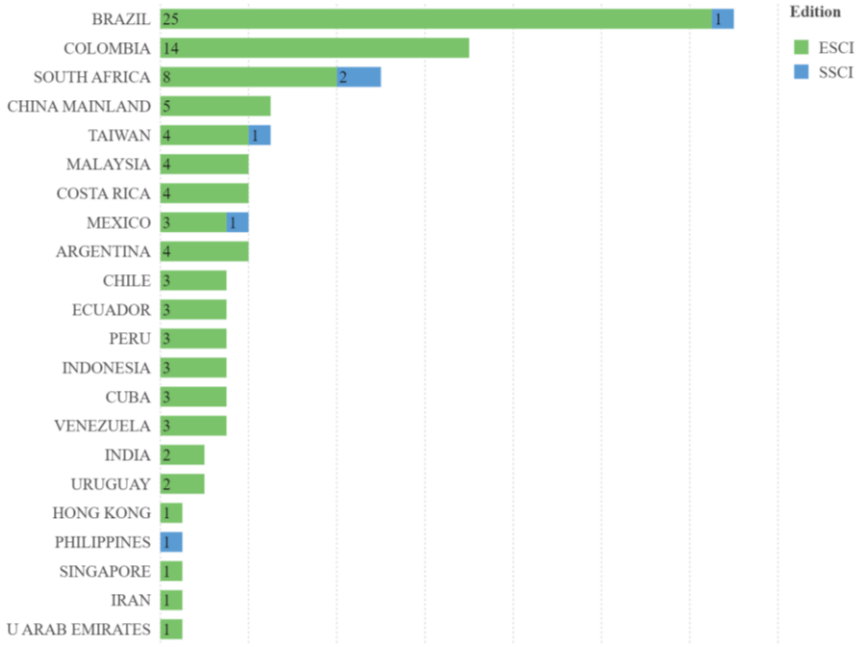
Figure 8 shows the total number of journals from each of the countries/regions of the Global South included in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. Figure 8 (a) indicates their index, whereas Figure 8 (b) shows their JIF 2023 quartile. While South Africa was the country from the Global South better represented in terms of SSCI journals (Figure 6 and Figure 8 [a]), when incorporating ESCI journals, Brazil and Colombia have outperformed it in terms of the number of journals ranked according to the JIF 2023. Together, Brazil and Colombia share the 38.83 % of the journals from the Global South in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. In particular, the Latin American and Caribbean region, with only two countries among the 19 ones that own SSCI journals —Brazil and Mexico, with one journal each—, have incorporated nine countries into the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. They are as follows: Colombia (14 journals); Argentina and Costa Rica (4 journals); Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela (3 journals); and Uruguay (2 journals). Finally, Mexico has four journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, and Brazil, 26.

Despite the amount of Latin American and Caribbean journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, which represents the 66.99 % of the journals from the Global South, all of them are placed in the lower JIF quartiles (JIF Q3 and JIF Q4), being the 81.16 % of them in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2023. In this sense, Asian countries outperform Latin American and Caribbean ones, owning the seven journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 that come from the Global South. In particular, Honk Kong, Philippines, and Singapore have placed their unique journal in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. The journal from Philippines is an SSCI one, whereas the Singaporean and the Hongkonger are ESCI ones, being the former, as already mentioned, the best-ranked ESCI journal in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. Finally, Eastern Asian countries, such as China (including China Mainland and Hong Kong) and Taiwan, with six and five journals each, outperform South and Southeastern Asian ones, such as India, Indonesia, Philippines, and Singapore, in terms of number of journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. They also outperform Malaysia (5 journals) in terms of the position of their journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023.

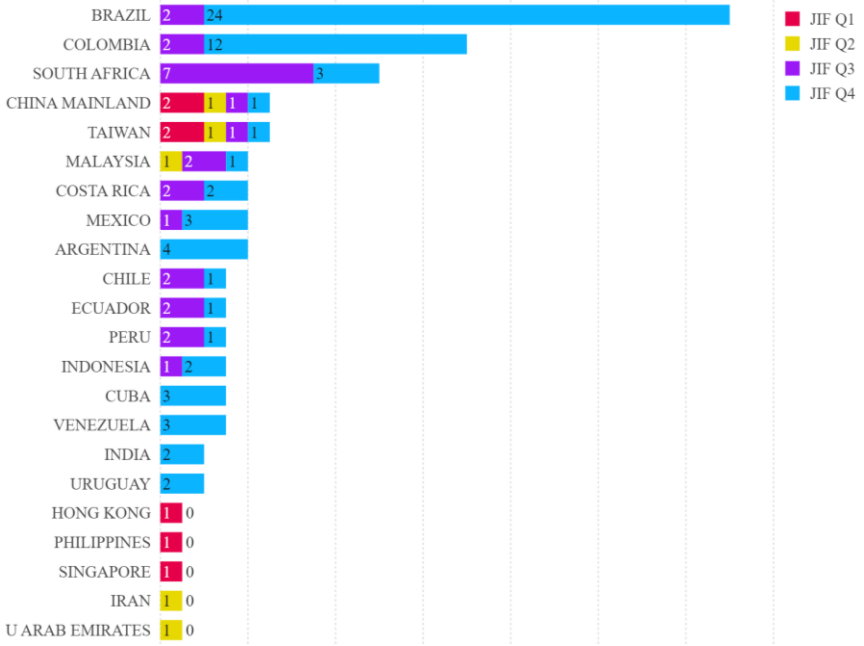
Figure 8

Number of journals from the Global South in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education & Educational Research category according to their corresponding country/region of origin

(a) *Journal's index*



(b) *JIF 2023 quartile*



Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023 (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home) and InCites (https://incites.clarivate.com/) data. Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).

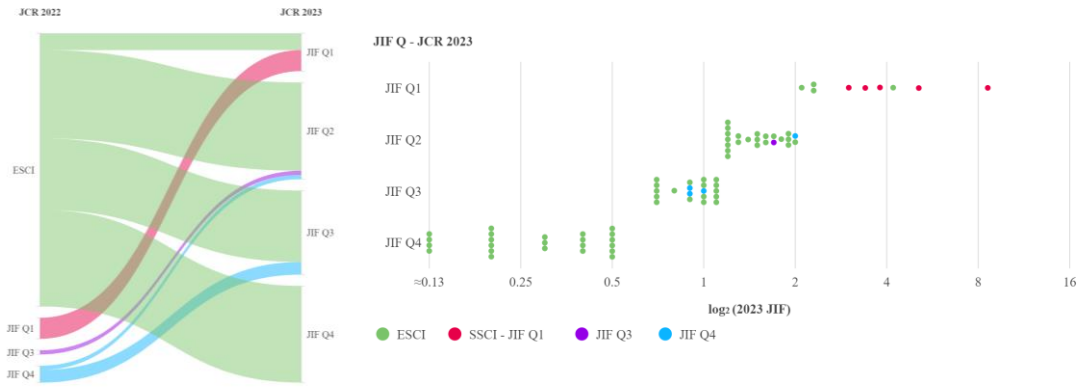
Note. ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

3.2 Spanish Journals

Figure 9 (left) shows the distribution of the Spanish journals in the Education and Educational Research category across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023 in terms of their condition in the JCR 2022, whether they were ranked in the JIF ranking (SSCI journals) or they were not (ESCI journals). In addition, Figure 9 (right) shows how these journals are positioned in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. The five Spanish SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022 have remained in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. The rest of the SSCI journals have been repositioned in a higher quartile in the JCR 2023 with respect to their rank in the JCR 2022. In particular, they have moved from the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2022 to the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023 or from the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 to the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023. The journal titled *Revista de Educación* (ISSN: 0034-8082) — whose JIF has risen from 1.4 in 2022 to 2 in 2023— is the only one that has scaled two quartile positions (from the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 to the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023).

Figure 9

Distribution of Spanish SSCI and ESCI journals of the Education & Educational Research category across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023: Journals' distribution according to their JCR 2022 indexation[19] *(left); Journals' distribution according to their JIF 2023 value (right)*[20]



Source: Elaborated by the article's author based on JCR 2023, JCR 2022 (https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr/home), and InCites (https://incites.clarivate.com/) data. Visualization tool: Scimago Graphica (https://www.graphica.app/).
Note. ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; JCR: Journal Citation Reports; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; Q: quartile; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index.

Among the 65 ESCI Spanish journals, four have been incorporated into the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. In this sense, they represent the 44.44 % of the nine Spanish journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research category. The rest of the ESCI journals are divided into the JIF Q2, JIF Q3, and JIF Q4 of the JCR 2023, contributing 21, 17, and 23 journals to each one, respectively. Then, the 38.46 % of the

[19] It is important to note that Figure 9 (left) shows the distribution of the journals across the JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023, but it does not take into account their actual positions within each JIF quartile. A detailed description of the journals' positions in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 is shown in Figure 9 (right).
[20] For SSCI journals, the corresponding JIF quartile of the JCR 2022 is indicated (in colors).

ESCI Spanish journals are positioned in the upper JIF quartiles of the JCR 2023 (JIF Q1 and JIF Q2). On the other hand, none SSCI Spanish journal remains in the JIF Q4 of the JCR 2023, being this JIF quartile occupied by ESCI journals.

In Parodi (2023), the Spanish journals of the Education and Educational Research WoS category were analyzed in terms of the JCI[21] 2021. The results showed that some ESCI journals outperformed some SSCI journals in terms of the JCI 2021. In particular, three ESCI journals were highlighted: *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, *Education in the Knowledge Society* (ISSN: 2444-8729), and *Campus Virtuales* (ISSN: 2255-1514). The first one was positioned third in terms of the JCI 2021, below two Spanish SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2021: *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* (ISSN: 2365-9440) and *Comunicar*. On the other hand, *Education in the Knowledge Society* and *Campus Virtuales* were positioned fifth and sixth in terms of the JCI 2021, respectively, below *Educación XX1* (Spanish SSCI journal in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2021), but outperforming *Revista de Psicodidáctica* (ISSN: 1136-1034) and *RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, Spanish SSCI journals in the JIF Q1 and JIF Q2 of the JCR 2021, respectively. In this sense, the ESCI Spanish journals *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, *Education in the Knowledge Society*, and *Campus Virtuales* were positioned, in terms of the JCI 2021, among the five SSCI Spanish journals that are currently ranked in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023: *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, *Comunicar*, *Educación XX1*, *Revista de Psicodidáctica*, and *RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia.*

Although the JIF quartiles are assigned based on the whole set of journals of the Education and Educational Research category (being Spanish journals a subset of them), and despite the differences between the calculation of the JIF and the JCI, the fact that ESCI journals outperformed —in terms of the JCI 2021— SSCI journals ranked in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2021, and even one of those in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2021, identified them as possible candidates to occupy outstanding positions when getting their JIF calculated and unifying the JIF ranking.

As already mentioned, the Spanish *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research* is among the five best-performing ESCI journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. Specifically, it is the third among them (considering that *Journal of Computers in Education* and *Journal of Teaching and Learning* tie in the second place) and it is ranked in the 28/760 position in the global JIF 2023 ranking of the Education and Educational Research category. Among the Spanish journals, it is in the third place, following the *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* and *Comunicar*. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research* is the only Spanish ESCI journal that ranks among the Spanish SSCI ones in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, outperforming the following SSCI journals: *Revista de Psicodidáctica*, *RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, and *Educación XX1*.

[21] The Journal Citation Indicator (JCI) is a field-normalized measure of citation impact based on the Category Normalized Citation Impact (CNCI). A value of 1.0 means that, across the journal, published papers received a number of citations equal to the average citation count in that category (Clarivate, 2021a).

In addition to *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, three more Spanish ESCI journals have been positioned in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023: *REICE-Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad Eficacia y Cambio en Educación* (ISSN: 1696-4713), *Espiral-Cuadernos del Profesorado* (ISSN: 1988-7701), and *RIE-Revista de Investigación Educativa* (ISSN: 0212-4068). They occupy the lower positions of the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. The first two have a JIF 2023 equal to 2.3, whereas the latter has a JIF 2023 equal to 2.1.

On the other hand, the other Spanish ESCI journals identified in Parodi (2023) as candidates for potentially occupying upper JIF quartiles —*Education in the Knowledge Society* and *Campus Virtuales*— are positioned in the upper limit of the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023, with JIF 2023 = 1.9 and JIF 2023 = 2, respectively (only journals with a JIF 2023 $\geq$ 2.1 are positioned in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 [see Table 2]). *Campus Virtuales* ties, in terms of the JIF 2023, with the Spanish SSCI journal *Revista de Educación*. *Education in the Knowledge Society*, on its part, ties with two Spanish ESCI journals (JIF 2023 = 1.9): *RED-Revista de Educación a Distancia* (ISSN: 1578-7680) and *Innoeduca-International Journal of Technology and Educational Innovation* (eISSN: 2444-2925). In addition to *Education in the Knowledge Society*, *Campus Virtuales*, *RED-Revista de Educación a Distancia*, and *Innoeduca-International Journal of Technology and Educational Innovation*, *Pixel-Bit- Revista de Medios y Educación* (ISSN: 1133-8482) (JIF 2023 = 1.8) completes the set of Spanish ESCI journals ranked in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023 that outperform the last Spanish SSCI journal in such JIF quartile: *Psicología Educativa* (eISSN: 2174-0526), which ties with the Spanish ESCI journal *International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation* (ISSN: 2386-4303), with a JIF 2023 equal to 1.7.

The following Spanish SSCI journal in the JIF ranking 2023, *Revista Española de Pedagogía* (ISSN: 0034-9461), is in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023, with JIF 2023 = 1, tying with four Spanish ESCI journals. These journals are followed by the Spanish SSCI ones, *Enseñanza de Las Ciencias* (ISSN: 0212-4521) and *Porta Linguarum* (ISSN: 1697-7467), and the Spanish ESCI ones, *Qualitative Research in Education* (ISSN: 2014-6418) and *Tuning Journal for Higher Education* (ISSN: 2340-8170). All of them are in the JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023, with JIF 2023 = 0.9. The latter close the list of 36 Spanish ESCI journals that outperform or tie Spanish SSCI journals in the JIF ranking 2023.

Finally, as mentioned in Section 3.1, most of the Spanish journals are published by universities, followed by learned societies. Table 3 shows the Spanish journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. While the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022 was dominated by Spanish journals published by for-profit publishers (three out of five), in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 journals published by universities prevail, representing the 55.55 %. Nevertheless, it is important to mention the particular case of the *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*[22] that has been published by the University of Alicante until 2023, but is published by Springer Nature since 2024. In this way, the best-ranked (in terms of the JIF 2023) Spanish ESCI journal, which positioned a university-published journal among the three SSCI Spanish journals that are published by commercial publishers, such as Springer, Oxbridge Publishing House, and Elsevier España, in the JIF ranking of the

[22] Web page of the *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*: https://naerjournal.com/

JCR 2023, is also published by a for-profit publisher since 2024, increasing the hegemony of journals belonging to this type of publishers in the upper JIF-ranking positions.

Table 3
Spanish journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 of the Education & Educational Research category

Journal Title	ISSN	Publisher	Index
International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education	2365-9440	Springer	SSCI
Comunicar	1134-3478	Oxbridge Publishing House	SSCI
Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research	2254-7339	Univ. Alicante, Grupo Investigación EDUTIC-ADEI*	ESCI
Revista de Psicodidáctica	1136-1034	Elsevier España	SSCI
RIED-Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia	1138-2783	Asociación Iberoamericana Educación Superior & Distancia - AIESAD	SSCI
Educación XX1	1139-613X	Univ. Nacional Educación Distancia	SSCI
REICE-Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad Eficacia y Cambio en Educación	1696-4713	Univ. Autónoma Madrid, Fac. Formación, Profesorado & Educación	ESCI
Espiral-Cuadernos del Profesorado	1988-7701	Univ. Almería	ESCI
RIE-Revista de Investigación Educativa	0212-4068	Univ. Murcia	ESCI

* Published by Springer Nature since 2024.

Source: JCR 2023.
Note. ESCI: Emerging Sources Citation Index; Fac.: Facultad; JIF: Journal Impact Factor; JCR: Journal Citation Report; Q: quartile; SSCI: Social Sciences Citation Index; Univ.: Universidad.

4. Discussion

The Education and Educational Research journals are widely represented in the ESCI index, standing out among the 41 WoS categories included in the Social Science, General group. In this line, the inclusion of the ESCI journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research category has significantly changed its landscape. To begin with, while the rationale behind giving ESCI (and AHCI) journals a JIF and unifying the JIF ranking is to boost their visibility, the incorporation of the ESCI journals into the JIF ranking 2023 of the Education and Educational Research category has tilted the JIF quartile distribution downward on the JIF 2023 scale, boosting SSCI journals to higher JIF quartiles. In particular, journals that were in the JIF Q2 and (some of the ones) that were in the JIF Q3 could rise to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, provided they maintained their JIF 2022 value in 2023. Moreover, even SSCI journals that have reduced their JIF 2023 with respect to their JIF 2022 have been upgraded. This scenario grounds the basis for SSCI journals to be redistributed across the upper JIF quartiles (JIF Q1 and JIF Q2) of the JCR 2023, relegating ESCI journals to the lower ones (JIF Q3 and JIF Q4), as suggested by Edmunds (2024). Although, as expected, this has happened, the extent to which (and how) this actually has occurred deserves further discussion.

On the one hand, 61.71 % of the SSCI journals have improved their JIF quartile position in the JCR 2023 with respect to their quartile position in the JCR 2022. Nevertheless, the 15.55 % of the SSCI journals occupy the lower JIF quartiles (JIF Q3 and JIF Q4) of the

JCR 2023. In addition, despite being favored by the downward-shifted JIF 2023 quartile distribution, almost the quarter (24.64 %) of the SSCI journals that were ranked in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022 have reduced their JIF 2023 below 2.1, remaining in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023. Moreover, the contribution of the ESCI journals to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 pairs that of the SSCI journals that were ranked in the JIF Q2 of the JCR 2022, being 28.64 % and 27.08 %, respectively. In addition, five ESCI journals outperform them all, as well as several SSCI journals that were ranked in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2022. In this way, the performance (in terms of the JIF 2023) of the 11.22 % of the ESCI journals that are ranked in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 not only positions them there, but also makes them comparable (in the context of the JIF ranking) to well-established SSCI high-ranked journals, blurring —in these cases, and in the considered scenario of the JIF ranking— the boundaries between the different journals' indexes.

The incorporation of the ESCI journals into the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research category has provided journals from 33 new countries/regions with the JIF-quartile quality seal, covering up to 52 countries/regions. Regarding the amount of ranked journals, the Spanish case stands out, ranking third, below England and USA, and outperforming Netherlands (that doubles Spain in terms of the number of SSCI journals). This positions Spain, which had a GERD as a percentage of the GDP of 1.41122 in 2021 (below the European average of 2.01882 and the Dutch [its closer competitor] one of 2.26877 in the same year), and whose journals are mainly published by universities and learned societies, within the most prolific journal-publishing landscape, dominated by countries with a long publishing tradition and a wide portfolio of commercial publishers.

Regarding the JIF-ranking positioning, it is not surprising that the downward-tilted JIF 2023 quartile distribution has favored editorial powers, such as England, USA, and Netherlands; being the latter specially benefited, multiplying its presence in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 by eight in relation to that of the JCR 2022. Moreover, despite Spain doubles the amount of Dutch journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, there are more Dutch journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 than Spanish ones. In particular, although both has incorporated four ESCI journals into the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, Netherlands has also included 10 SSCI ones (the whole Spanish SSCI portfolio of the category) in it. The difference in the number of journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023 between Netherlands and Spain is then twofold. On the one hand, despite Spain has 65 ESCI journals and Netherlands, 11, both have positioned four in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, representing the 36.36 % and 6.15 % of them, respectively. On the other hand, Spain "only" has 10 SSCI journals, and none of them has been upgraded to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. That is, even though Spanish SSCI journals that were in the JIF Q3 and JIF Q4 of the JCR 2022 have risen to the JIF Q2 and JIF Q3 of the JCR 2023, they could not take further advantage of the downward-shifted JIF 2023 quartile distribution to rise to the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023. Finally, the performance of the Spanish SSCI journals contrasts to that of the Spanish ESCI ones that not only occupy the 44.44 % of the Spanish JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023, but position the ESCI indexed *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research* third among the Spanish ones and 28/760 in the global JIF 2023 ranking.

Journals from 17 countries of the Global South have been ranked in the JIF ranking of the Education and Educational Research category for the first time in the JCR 2023. The

performance of Latin American countries, specifically Brazil and Colombia, is remarkable in terms of the number of journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. They have ranked fifth and tenth, respectively (see Figure 7). The Brazilian dominance was expectable. It is the most prolific country in Latin America, with a GERD as percentage of the GDP of 1.14526 in 2020 (almost twice the Latin America and Caribbean average [0.58963] in the same year[23]), and its presence in ESCI has already been highlighted (Céspedes, 2021; Repiso et al., 2017). Moreover, it is the ninth country (globally) in terms of the number of journals included in the JCR 2023, being Education and Educational Research the category that concentrates most of them. In this line, the Brazilian fifth position in terms of the number of journals in the JIF ranking 2023 of the category, being comparable to that of Australia and Canada (GERD as percentage of the GDP 2021 equal to 1.85509 and 1.86431, respectively) demonstrates its efforts to provide researchers in the region with numerous quality journal alternatives —now legitimized by the JIF-quartile seal— to disseminate their research, as well as to sustain a productive publishing market, mainly based on universities. The same stands for Colombia, being positioned in the tenth place, but with a GERD as percentage of the GDP far below the Brazilian one (0.2894 in 2020).

One of the main reasons of including ESCI journals in the JIF ranking is to boost their visibility (Edmunds, 2024; Quaderi, 2024), incentivizing researchers that are pressured to publish in prestigious journals to draw their attention toward domestic or regional journals that can allow them publishing regionally relevant research that addresses local problems with a global projection. Nevertheless, it is not just about belonging to but about positioning in the JIF ranking. Despite the Latin American and Caribbean journals represent the 66.99 % of the ones from the Global South in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, none of them is in the upper JIF quartiles (JIF Q1 and JIF Q2) of the JCR 2023, being outperformed by Asian countries, such as China Mainland (2021 GERD as percentage of the GDP: 2.4326) and Taiwan[24]. In this line, they are at disadvantage. Future studies could reflect the extent to which the JIF-quartile seal —but the Q3 or Q4 one— can actually make these journals more appealing. Meanwhile, the current scenario, which allows comparing them with global leaders as well as superior Global South economies, sheds light to the efforts that have been done until now and shows room for improvement. In particular, since, similarly to the Spanish case, Latin American and Caribbean journals are mainly published by universities, this calls research authorities to promote and support them, which have already obtained the JIF-quartile quality seal, being time to work on a sustainable editorial market that can improve their visibility and performance.

4.1 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study

In this paper, the scholarly-scientific journals in the field of education have been evaluated within the context of the Education and Educational Research WoS category, specifically those included in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. In particular, we have analyzed the impact of the inclusion of the ESCI journals to the unified JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. Considering the nature of ESCI journals, the geographical coverage of the new

[23] In the case of Latin American countries, the gross domestic expenditure on research & development (GERD) as percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) data are updated until 2020.
[24] There are not UIS data for the GERD as percentage of the GDP of Taiwan.

JIF ranking, making special focus on journals from the Global South, has been discussed. A comparative study in terms of geographical coverage with other widely used journal rankings, such as the SCImago Journal Rank based on Scopus data, could complement the analysis.

In addition, the conducted study has been limited to the context of the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. A multidimensional and multiplatform analysis could extend the proposed one, enabling to evaluate further journal aspects.

Finally, the inclusion of the ESCI journals in the JIF ranking is expected to improve their visibility. Further research, considering different dimensions, such as web page visits, article views and downloads, number of submissions, citations, etc., could be conducted to evaluate the extent to which this can be confirmed. Moreover, a local and regional analysis could be performed to understand how researchers from different countries and regions react to the new JIF-quartile-holder journals, how the JIF-quartile position shapes their adoption, and the actual influence that these journals have on the different research systems.

5. Conclusions

The publish-or-perish culture, which pressures researchers to publish more, faster, and in higher-impact journals to secure their careers and funding, has been translated into a competitive landscape, where researchers need to publish as many articles as possible, and publishers want to attract as many of them as they can. In this context, questionable publishing practices, such as predatory journals and the so-called nefarious numbers, have flourished, posing several challenges to the whole scientific community. On the one hand, researchers struggle to select a reliable and impactful media for research dissemination, as well as to find well-grounded sources of relevant information to base their research. On the other hand, several publishers, especially small ones from emerging economies and those based on diamond-OA principles, remain "invisible" and face unfair competence. Finally, funders lack solid data for research evaluation. To counter these threats, Clarivate, the owner of WoS, has implemented a series of editorial policy updates to ensure a properly curated, reliable academic-scientific journal corpus, as well as robust, transparent, and trustworthy bibliometric measures. Among them, the inclusion of ESCI (and some AHCI) journals in the JIF rankings of the JCR 2023 is a milestone in the journal evaluation scenario, affecting researchers, publishers, and funders.

In this paper, we have analyzed the new landscape of the Education and Educational Research journals included in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. The obtained results are intended to help researchers, publishers, and funders in the field to evaluate the quality journals included in the JCR 2023 in terms of the JIF ranking, besides the collection in which they are indexed, and give them valuable insights for informed decision-making in terms of impactful research dissemination media, trustworthy research sources and data, editorial strategies, and research evaluation.

The inclusion of the ESCI journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research category has tilted the JIF quartile distribution downward, favoring several SSCI journals, which have been upgraded even though having reduced their JIF 2023 with respect to their JIF 2022. In spite of this, and although, as expected,

SSCI journals have been mainly repositioned in the upper JIF quartiles (JIF Q1 and JIF Q2) of the JCR 2023, the 15.55 % of them occupy the lower JIF quartiles (JIF Q3 and JIF Q4) of the JCR 2023. ESCI journals, on their part, and in spite of having (on average) a lower JIF 2023 value than SSCI ones, have positioned the 11.22 % and 23.26 % of their journals in the JIF Q1 and JIF Q2 of the JCR 2023, respectively.

The conducted geographical analysis provides researchers, publishers, and funders, a further dimension to consider in the decision-making process, which is crucial within the educational research environment due to the key role that education plays in the development of a country. In particular, this is critical in emerging economies, such as the ones in the Global South, toward fulfilling the need for developing and publishing locally and regionally focused research that addresses local problems, which has long been threatened by the publish —in high-impact (usually foreign) journals— or perish culture.

Thirty-three new countries/regions have been included in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the Education and Educational Research category, multiplying more than twice (in relation to the JCR 2022) the number of countries/regions whose journals are provided with the JIF-quartile quality seal. In particular, while the superiority of countries with a long-established editorial tradition and a wide portfolio of commercial publishers, such as USA, England, and Netherlands, remains, Spain —whose journals are mainly published by universities— stands out regarding the number of journals in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023, outperforming Netherlands and placing third. The other way around occurs in terms of the number of journals in the JIF Q1, where Netherlands replaces Spain in the third position.

Finally, journals from 17 countries of the Global South have been ranked in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023 of the category for the first time. Among the Global South countries, Latin American and Caribbean ones, especially Brazil and Colombia —whose journals, as Spanish ones, are mainly published by universities—, have demonstrated to be active actors in the editorial landscape of the field, sharing the 66.99 % of the journals from the Global South in the JIF ranking of the JCR 2023. Distinguishing them with the JIF-quartile quality seal can incentivize researchers in the region that are pressured to publish in prestigious journals to draw their attention to them and publish regionally relevant research that addresses local problems with a global projection, preventing them from changing their research scope to publish in international journals. Nevertheless, taking into account their poor performance in terms of JIF-ranking positioning (they are outperformed by Asian countries, such as China and Taiwan, regarding the number of journals in the JIF Q1 of the JCR 2023), to increase the probability of attracting researchers and their quality research, it is essential to work toward a sustainable regional editorial market capable of enhancing journals' visibility and improving their quality, making them more competitive within the new journal evaluation landscape.

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