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Research Article

Scientific Production on Legal Translation (1988-2023): A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

Legal translation is a discipline that identifies the different legal systems based on the interpretation of a text. This research was developed based on a bibliometric analysis of scientific production. The Scopus database was selected because it is multidisciplinary and brings together high-impact journals. The methodology incorporated the bibliometric analysis of 417 articles and the application of the documentary analysis technique. The results obtained show that scientific production has increased in recent years and that the most frequently used terms are legal translation, legal language, legal terminology, and comparative law. Likewise, the most productive journals in the field of legal translation belong to quartile 2. In the same line, the most productive authors have 8 registered articles and Spain is the country that stands out for the total number of articles and citations. Similarly, the skills of the legal translator were identified, who must be conceptually congruent, strategic, and multilingual. It was concluded that legal translation is a subject that is projected to continue to grow moderately in terms of scientific production.

Keywords: Bibliometric analysis, Interpretation, Legal Culture, Skills, University

1. Introduction

The traditional conception of the rights of individuals is limited to the territorial sphere, i.e. the legal system applies to the facts and sanctions identified in a country. The detail arises when, for academic, research, or regulatory purposes, it is necessary to know the extra-territorial reality. This is how it becomes clear that legal terms are not always used in the same dimension of their meaning.

Legal translation is a discipline that draws on other areas of knowledge. It is characterized by specificity and depth to recognize the context and meet professional requirements. The study and practice of translation require changes and challenges in the training of legal translators. For example, it is essential to know the legal systems of the country of origin and destination to fulfill the task entrusted to them (Ramos, 2015; Way, 2016; Orozco, & Sanchez-Gijon, 2011).

The translator's task is not limited to finding equivalence between the source and target text. If this were the case, there would be many doubts or gaps that would make their work impossible. It should be made clear that translating is not about finding a synonym to replace the original text (Cheng, Sin, & Cheng, 2014).

The present study aims to analyze the scientific production of legal translation. The bibliometric analysis makes it possible to recognize research trends in the selected topic. The following research questions were considered:

RQ1: What is the research trend in scientific publications on legal translation?

RQ2: What are the 10 most influential journals on legal translation?

RQ3: What are the 10 authors and countries that have contributed the most to the scientific production of legal translation?

RQ4: What are the most prominent topics from reading the abstracts of the scientific production on legal translation?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Antecedents

From the literature review, it is reported that the bibliometric analysis of legal translation was conducted in 2022. However, it is noted that the Web of Science - Core Collection database was used (Li, & Hu, 2022). The present study was developed in the Scopus database and it is not stated that no research with similar characteristics to the current one was found.

2.2 Characteristics of legal translation

- Translation of legal texts is linguistically complex (Hjort-Pedersen, & Faber, 2010; Faber, & Reimerink, 2019).
- A multi-perspective approach is required to analyze and interpret legal terms (Engberg, 2020; Otón, 2015).
- It must ensure that parties are on equal cross-linguistic communication (Matulewska, & Wagner, 2021; Sandrini, 2018).
- It must be taught to develop competencies in future legal translators (Matulewska, 2019; Gómez González-Jover, 2011).
- There is no global reference system because each legal system has its particularities (Holl, 2012).
- The translator must know different languages to identify the appropriate terms and complement his or her professional performance (He, 2017; Farhan, 2023).
- It is based on professional ethics, which is possible through compliance with codes of conduct and professional performance by ethical principles (Zhang, & Li, 2023).

2.3   Contribution of legal translation

a) Intermediary function between countries: Legal translation explores and understands cultural discrepancies. The problem in using legal language is how to recognize equivalences when the legal texts and the country context have no apparent connection. This is produced by asymmetries between cultures. Globalization focuses on the interconnection of peoples, therefore, the role of translators is encompassed in teaching and learning to be intermediaries in linking countries (Cheng, Gong, & Li, 2017; Claramonte, 2013; Cao, 2014; Rodríguez-Castro, & Sullivan, 2015; Vušović, 2022).

b) Integrative function between methods: Legal translation requires the use of comparative law methods. This means that common elements in different legal systems must be recognized. The process of translation is represented by the theory of law or the new conception of the formation of justice. This field is related to the identification of the construction of legality as the central axis of action for translators. It is the essence of the function that provides an integrative approach based on the use of the legal structure between countries (Megale, 2015; Jopek-Bosiacka, 2013; Bittar, 2021; Bajcic, 2011).

c) Humanist function: Legal translation stands out because it contributes to the right of defense against a criminal charge or to resolve a legal conflict. The translator's contribution is linked to the level or quality of his or her translation. This is possible to the extent that he or she specializes in different legal systems. His or her task is not the identification of translated terms because they may be different, depending on the country in which they are used (Moreno, 2020; Atabekova, & Gorbatenko, 2017; Bestué, 2016).

d) Specialisation function: Legal translation requires the translator to be familiar with specialized texts in the legal area. Otherwise, he or she would denaturalize his or her function. The contribution consists of using expert knowledge management systems to obtain greater precision of the conceptual and linguistic information required (Albi, & García-Izquierdo, 2016; Gong, & Cheng, 2023).

2.4   Fundamental facts related to legal translation

The first fact is the complete mastery of the legal system and its respective terminology. This represents a challenge for the legal translator since it is not just a matter of expressing the equivalence of terms. On the contrary, it requires knowledge of semantics to provide a quality service at a professional level. Failure to do so results in the violation of rights (Gishti, & Cabej, 2022).

The second fact refers to knowing the context of the place where the translation will be done. It is important to understand that terminology varies according to the target course or country where it is applied. In other words, there is the possibility of identifying syntactic problems in the language. Ignoring this would be a mistake whose consequences could be irreparable (Setkowicz-Ryszka, 2022). Translating without considering the context would not serve the intended purpose.

The third fact is determined by the use of legal interpretation. That is, the translator takes on the challenge of finding the equivalence of terms and at the same time is responsible for the use of legal methods that he/she will use to compare the legal systems of the countries. It is necessary to prevent any problems arising from the inappropriate use of legal interpretation (Zeifert, & Tobor, 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the field of law, so that it provides for the use of one or all methods of interpretation.

The fourth fact relates to the acquisition of the legal translator's skills. Legal translation is not to be considered lightly; appropriate training is required to make decisions. The selection of the equivalence of legal terms is the essence of the professional service contract. Disregarding it is an irresponsible act (Alwazna, 2022; Wagner, & Matulewska, 2021).

3. Method

3.1 Bibliometric analysis

Bibliometric analysis is related to the quantitative method and can be part of different research topics. It is characterized by the identification of research trends in an area of knowledge. It is important to recognize developments in scientific research (Donthu, et al., 2021; Ellegaard, & Wallin, 2015).

3.2 Selected database

The Scopus database was searched on May 28, 2023. This database is multidisciplinary and gathers a large number of high-impact journals, therefore, scientific rigor is ensured by the peer review process (Falagas, et al., 2008; Mongeon, & Paul-Hus, 2016; Aghaei Chadegani, et al., 2013).

3.3 Search formula

The search was considered based on the title, abstract, and keywords: "legal translat*". The initial search yielded 643 documents.

3.4 Inclusion criteria

The search period is from 1988 to 28 May 2023.
We included:
a) Open Access: All Open Access, Gold, Gold Hybrid, Bronze, and Green.
b) b) Year: 1988-May 2023.
c) Type of document: Article.
d) Publication stage: Final.
e) Type of source: Journal and Book Series.
f) Language: All languages.
The following were excluded
a) Type of document: Book, book chapter, conference paper, editorial, erratum, note, review, and short survey.
b) Publication stage: In press.

3.5 Selected documents:

The result of the application of the exclusion criteria is 417 documents.

3.6 Tools for data analysis

The research team established the need to use Microsoft Excel and the software R-studio 4.1.0, the bibliometrix package, and the Biblioshiny interface to analyze the data obtained from the Scopus database (Aria, & Cuccurullo, 2017).

3.7 Bibliometric indicators

This study is based on 3 bibliometric indicators.
The first indicator, called production, identifies the most influential authors and journals. The second indicator is called visibility and allows the identification of the highest number of citations. The third indicator is called collaboration and allows the identification of co-authored contributions (Ardanuy, 2012).

3.8 Documentary analysis

The documentary analysis technique was used, which is complementary to the bibliometric analysis.

Table 1. Research problem, aims, and indicators

Identification of problems, objectives, and indicators		
Research problem	Aims	Indicators
RQ1: What is the research trend in scientific publications on legal translation?	To analyze the evolution and scientific production of legal translation.	Production: Diachronic productivity and keywords.
RQ2: What are the 10 most influential legal translation journals?	To analyze the scientific production of the 10 most influential journals on legal translation.	Visibility: Most productive journals on the topic
RQ3: Which are the 10 authors and countries that have contributed the most to the scientific production of legal translation?	To analyze the 10 authors and countries that have contributed most to the scientific production of legal translation.	Collaborative: Most prolific authors and most prolific countries.
RQ4: What are the most prominent themes in the reading of abstracts of scientific production on legal translation?	To analyze the scientific production and identify the most salient themes from reading the abstracts of scientific production on legal translation.	Documentary analysis technique.

4. Results

4.1 Scientific development and production

Figure 1 shows the scientific production over time. The selected database was Scopus and the registration period was from 1988 to May 2023. It is worth mentioning that in the first decades, there was no growth in the subject of legal translation. It is from 2010 onwards that the trend is noticeable. In 2013, 2017, 2019 and 2021 the increase was on average from 32 to 57 documents. In this regard, the Annual Growth Rate is 5.25%. It is expected that growth during 2023 will be moderate.
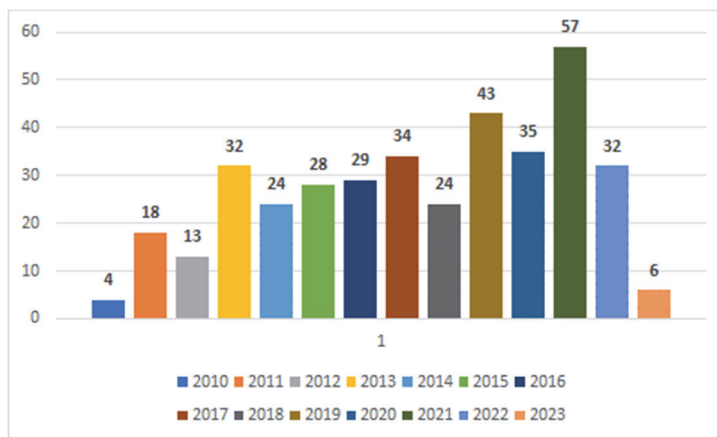

Figure 1. Annual Scientific Production

4.1.1 Most used keywords

Figure 2 shows five interrelated clusters. The green cluster is the main cluster and the following keywords stand out: legal translation, legal language, legal terminology, comparative law, multilingualism, equivalence, jurilinguistics, legal discourse, translation techniques, legal interpretation, legal translator training, and machine translation. The other clusters are in the

process of growth and the following keywords stand out: hybrid texts, multilingual law, law, translation, interpretation, legal system, terminology, and phraseology.
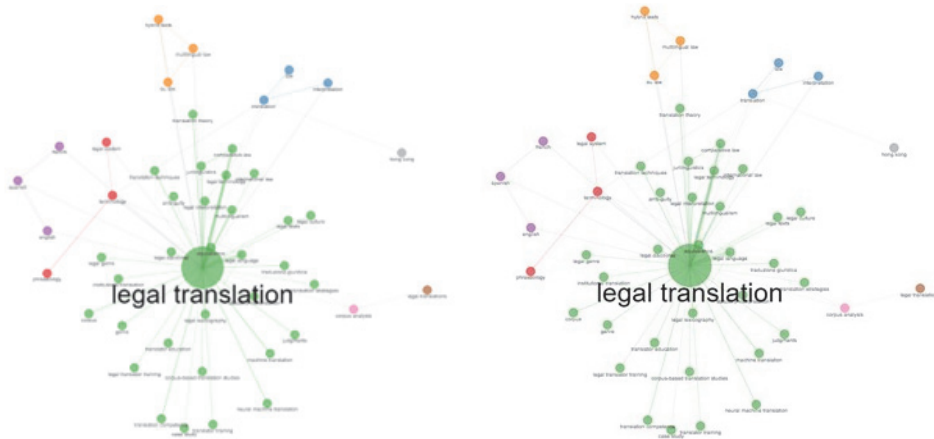

Figure 2. Co-occurrence Network

4.2 *Scientific output of the 10 most influential journals*

Figure 3 shows the 10 most influential journals on the subject of legal translation. It can be seen that the first journal is called International Journal for the Semiotics of Law (ISSN:0952-8059), with an H-index of 16 belongs to quartile 2, the Subject area and Category are Law and Linguistics and Language, published by Springer Naturel, current in Scopus since 2004, it registered 39 articles.

The second journal is called Llengua I Dret (ISSN: 0212-5056 / E-ISSN: 2013-1453), with an H-index of 7 belongs to quartile 2, the Subject area and Category are Law and Linguistics and Language, published by Escola d'Administracio Publica de Catalunya, current in Scopus since 2011, it registered 21 articles.

The third journal is Studies in Logic, Grammar, and Rhetoric (ISSN:0860-150X), with an H-index of 14 belongs to quartile 2, the Subject area and Category are Arts and Humanities, published by the University of Bialystok, current in Scopus since 2011, it registered 20 articles.

The fourth journal is called International Journal of Legal Discourse (ISSN: 2364-8821 / E-ISSN: 2364-883X), with an H-index of 6 belonging to quartile 2, the Subject area and Category is Social Sciences, published by Walter de Gruyter, current in Scopus since 2016, registered 15 articles.

The fifth journal is called Babel (ISSN: 0521-9744), with an H-index of 17 belongs to quartile 2, the Subject area and Category is Social Sciences, published by John Benjamins Publishing Company, current in Scopus since 1995, it registered 12 articles.

The sixth journal is Meta (Canada), with ISSN:0026-0452, with an H-index of 34 belongs to quartile 2, the Subject area and Category are Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences, current in Scopus since 1974, and it registered 11 articles.

The seventh journal is Perspectives: Studies in Translatology (ISSN:0907-676X / E-ISSN:1747-6623), with an H-index of 30 it belongs to quartile 1, the Subject area and Category are Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences, in Scopus since 1996, it registered 11 articles.

The eighth journal is called Semiotica (ISSN:0037-1998 / E-ISSN:1613-3692), with an H-index of 39 belongs to quartile 1, the Subject area and Category are Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences, current in Scopus since 1969, it registered 11 articles.

The ninth journal is Comparative Legilinguistics (ISSN: 2080-5926 / E-ISSN: 2391-4491), with an

H-index of 1 belongs to quartile 4, the Subject area and Category is Social Science, current in Scopus until 2021, it registered 10 articles.

The tenth journal is Interpreter and Translator Trainer (ISSN:1750-399X / E-ISSN:1757-0417), with an H-index of 28 belongs to quartile 1, the Subject area and Category is Social Science, current in Scopus since 1969, it registered 8 articles.
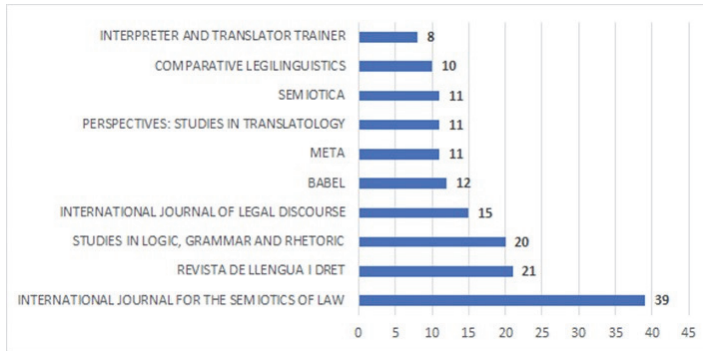

Figure 3. Most Relevant Sources

4.3   Authors and countries that contributed most to scientific production

Table 1 shows the 10 most productive authors in the field of legal translation. The authors Patrizia Giampieri and Aleksandra Matulewska occupy the first place with 8 articles in their production, however, there is a difference in the h-index. The author Fernando Prieto-Ramos stands out with his contribution of 7 articles and with his h-index of 9. The author Anabel Borja Albí stands out with her contribution of 6 articles to the scientific community and has an h-index of 4. Authors Carmen Bestué, Débora Cao, Cheng, and Hjort-Pedersen contributed 4 articles each to the scientific production on legal translation.

Table 2 shows the total number of citations for the 10 most productive countries in legal translation. It should be noted that in the period 2021 -2023, authors are still interested in the topic, and it is projected that this year will see an increase in the number of articles.

Table 1. Most productive authors

N	Authors	Total documents	H-index	Affiliation	Scopus Author Identifier
1	Giampieri, Patrizia	8	3	Università degli Studi di Camerino, Camerimo, Italia	57201796995
2	Matulewska, Aleksandra	8	6	Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu , Poznan, Polonia	36080591800
3	Prieto-Ramos, Fernando	7	9	Université de Genève, Ginebra, Suiza	56480016400
4	Borja Albí, Anabel	6	4	Universidad Jaume I, Castellon de la Plana, Spain	55604443800
5	Engberg, Jan	5	9	Aarhus Universitet, Aarhus, Denmark	35336419700
6	Pontrandolfo, Gianluca	5	6	Università degli Studi di Trieste, Trieste, Italy	55948629400
7	Bestué, Carmen	4	5	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Cerdanyola del Valles, Spain	55973488800
8	Cao, Débora	4	8	Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia	56223692100
9	Cheng, Le	4	14	Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China	26038082200
10	Hjort-Pedersen, Mette	4	4	Copenhagen Business School, Frederiksberg, Denmark	26038271200

Table 2. Total country citations

N	Country	Total articles	Total citations	Last Three Years of Production
1	Spain	43	185	2023: 101 2022: 101 2021: 94
2	Switzerland	17	116	2023: 26 2022: 24 2021: 24
3	United Kingdom	9	96	2023: 25 2022: 23 2021: 22
4	France	7	80	2023: 19 2022: 19 2021: 19
5	Poland	15	55	2023: 44 2022: 44 2021: 42
6	Australia	6	41	2023: 9 2022: 8 2021: 8
7	Denmark	7	41	2023: 13 2022: 12 2021: 12
8	Hong Kong	9	35	2023: 15 2022: 15 2021: 15
9	Italy	15	32	2023: 31 2022: 30 2021: 27
10	Canada	9	29	2023: 11 2022: 11 2021: 11

4.4   Identifying the subject matter: skills of the legal translator

From the literature review it appears that the legal translator must have the following skills:

- Conceptual congruence: Conceptual congruence is the skill that contributes to the professional practice of the legal translator. It does not allow words to be replaced by synonyms. The characteristic of its development is the identification of the legal culture and legal systems of the intervening countries. It is not advisable to force and manipulate meanings, as this represents an irresponsible act (Alwazna, 2019; Gemar, 2015; Giampieri, 2018).
- Being strategic: Strategy is the ability acquired by the legal translator to know the reality from an international, political, and economic perspective. In this way, his or her role is not limited to the legal text or fragment, as this could lead to errors in professional service (Wolf, 2012; Farrokhi, 2019; Lavoie, 2003; Alwazna, 2017; Matulewska, 2017). Knowledge of both national and international legislation will enable the translator to have a better foundation for his or her work.
- Being multilingual: This skill is essential for legal translators because it allows them to know the functions of legal terminology in the source and target country. This shows the need to incorporate the importance of languages into the translator's training. To argue otherwise would represent a disadvantage in the professional service (Xuan, & Xiaobo, 2017; Husa, 2017; Orts, 2012; Mac Aodha, 2014).

5. Discussion

RQ1: What is the research trend in scientific publications on legal translation?

In the period 1988 to May 2023, the scientific production on legal translation was analyzed using bibliometrics. It can be seen that it is from 2011 onwards that interest in the research topic is most noticeable. It is recognized that there have been years in which the difference in production decreased or increased concerning the previous year. For example, in 2017, 34 articles were published and in 2018, 24 articles were published. Despite this, the topic is still relevant, as can be seen from the average of the last three years. Up to May 2023, 6 articles are registered, which reiterates the projection that the growth will be moderate compared to the last two years contemplated in Figure 1.

The above is in line with research which concludes that legal translators need to know the legal system, the legal language, and the legal dictionary. This was not mandatory in previous decades. Nowadays, with the incorporation of language modifications, the promotion of inclusive language, and respect for the gender perspective, the increase in scientific production recorded in recent years is understandable (Jiang, & Zhuang, 2019; Favila-Alcalá, 2020).

RQ2: What are the 10 most influential journals on legal translation?

The results show that the 10 most influential journals in the research topic correspond mostly to quartile 2 of the Scopus database. It can be seen that the International Journal for the Semiotics of Law (ISSN:0952-8059) stands out for its scientific production by registering 39 documents. Likewise, the area and category of publications are centered on Art Humanities and Social Sciences.

It should be noted that legal translation focuses on finding new ways of communicating ideas, which is done creatively. Likewise, it should be noted that Law, being a Social Science, reflects the need to study and implement the basic terminology derived from a legal system that regulates the conduct of a society. This proves the authors' predisposition to select the area and category mentioned in the previous paragraph (Pommer, 2008; Terral, 2004).

RQ3: Which are the 10 authors and countries that contributed most to the scientific production of legal translation?

The results show that the authors Patrizia Giampieri and Aleksandra Matulewska stand out for their scientific production, both occupying first place in Table 1 by registering 8 articles. It is worth mentioning that the current affiliation of the authors is Università degli Studi di Camerino, Camerimo, Italy, and Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznan, Poland, respectively. The two countries coincide in registering 15 articles each as scientific production; however, they differ in the total number of citations, for Italy, it is 32, and for Poland, it is 55.

Spain ranks first in the total number of citations and articles related to legal translation. Table 2 shows that countries such as France and Denmark have 7 articles as scientific production, but the total number of citations is interesting, because they report 80 and 41, respectively. Along the same line, it is necessary to highlight that in the last three years, scientific production in the field of legal translation has shown a moderate increase.

In the same vein, it is necessary to recognize the research that expresses that machine translation is a new challenge for legal translators. This idea is not opposed to the use of technology. On the contrary, it is an opportunity to continue training legal translators and the reader to avoid surprises arising from ignorance of the interpretation of legal texts in the source and target country. The experience of the legal translator is invaluable and must be protected because his or her role is intermediary and integrative in the learning of law at the extraterritorial level (Wiesmann, 2019).

RQ4: What are the most prominent themes in the reading of abstracts of scientific production on legal translation?

The most prominent theme is related to the skills of the legal translator. This point is important because it is understood that the role of this professional does not only consist of the act headed by reading. On the contrary, the identification made in the present work contributes to the training of future generations. Training should focus on promoting conceptual congruence, strategy, and language diversity (multilingual). The aforementioned skills are essential in the professional

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performance of a legal translator.

In this sense, we agree with the research that states that interpretation is necessary for the work of legal translators and that they must know how to communicate their work effectively. Along the same lines, it is recognized that translation is not limited to a specific territory and that it is advisable to develop it creatively (Hargitt, 2013; Jopek-Bosiacka, 2011; Monjean-Decaudin, 2010; Lavoie, 2002).

5.1 Research suggestion

The legal translation should be incorporated at the subject level in law schools to promote a holistic view of legal interpretation and respect for legal cultures and systems. Law students must apply and question what they learn in class sessions. Likewise, the application of Comparative Law should not be limited to the location of a specific article with similar characteristics between the country of origin and the country of destination. In this sense, it is important to know the perception of the students and lawyers about what has been described. The syllabus corresponding to the legal argumentation course should consider legal translation in its sessions.

6. Conclusions

The bibliometric analysis carried out using the Scopus database identified 417 articles on legal translation. The most representative authors, countries, and journals in the scientific production of the selected topic were identified. It was identified that legal translation is a current topic with the implementation of themes, for example, with machine translation.

The complementary technique to bibliometric analysis is documentary analysis. From the literature review, it is clear that the legal translator stands out for conceptual congruence, strategy, and language skills (multilingual). These skills are essential in the professional service provided by interpreting legal texts from a source country to the target country.

Legal translation is a subject whose scientific production will continue to grow moderately this year. It focuses on the work carried out based on recognition and respect for the culture and legal systems of other countries. It is necessary for the implementation of comparative law in the future research of law schools.

7. Limitations of the Research

The present research was carried out with the Scopus database as a reference, so future research could increase the number of databases.

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