

Media as a scholarly source of information: citations for legal theses and dissertations

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This study sought to determine the citation of media sources by law students in South Africa. Data were gathered from theses and dissertations of selected law schools in the country using specifically designed excel spreadsheets comprising columns for citations and sources, among others. The results, in relation to the research questions of the study, indicate that the media, as a source of information, was the least cited while other secondary sources of information, such as journal articles and books, were among the most cited sources. Regarding media use, the results show that newspapers had a high citation rate, followed by television and radio, with magazines coming last. The study findings also indicate that two African economic giants, namely South Africa, and Nigeria, were among the main origins of the media cited, alongside the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The results further indicate that the Mail and Guardian, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and the Economist magazine were the most cited forms of media. The findings also indicate a positive but weak relationship between the scholarly (citation) and public impact (circulation) of media sources. At the end, it was recommended that studies of media citations in other disciplines, as well as new media, be conducted to further inform both practice and theory regarding the scholarship of media.

Keywords: Media, theses and dissertations, law, citation analysis, television, radio, magazine

1 Introduction

The term media is described as a plural noun, and medium is a singular (Messenger 2010). Medium is a channel or conduit through which information is passed. When there is more than one, for example, these are media. Media, therefore, can be defined as communication that is delivered through some types of media such as television (TV), radio, newspaper, and computer (ExplonetNetCareerTech. n.d.). Through media, human beings can communicate to a larger audience without physically present to the receiver of the message (Paul & Rai, 2021). The sender of the message may not even be aware who the receiver is and vice versa. It can be divided into traditional or old media (newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV), traditional electronic media (online newspapers, online magazines, online broadcasting, Internet radio), and lately social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, and Twitter (Bischoff 2014).

The media is often perceived as a vital source of information for scholars and students alike (Alabi 2015; Meyer 2018; Paul & Rai 2021). It can lead researchers to other information sources, educate, entertain, and assist them to keep abreast of new developments in their fields (Abalaka, Yahaya & Okikiri 2014). Additionally, the media can help scholars disseminate their research (Fanelli 2013). Palamar and Strain (2021) refer to media as a proxy for determining the public impact of research. For students, media sources can improve their functional reading and writing skills (Akanda & Haque 2013). There is evidence that students and scholars consult media sources for educational and research purposes (Akanda & Haque 2013; Alabi 2015; Meyer 2018).

In the legal fraternity, the media helps to raise awareness about developments in courts, assists in disseminating crucial information about people's rights, allows for the reporting of instances where those rights are / were threatened, provides laymen's analysis of court proceedings, case law and legislation, and is seen as a champion and vanguard of society's rights (Tiwari 2018). Media can ensure that powerful members of the society are held to the same standards as ordinary members in court proceedings. The media can serve as a watchdog that ensures that the government upholds and advances democratic ideals (Gumede 2014).

Taking into account the preceding, it is no surprise that scholars use the media as a source of legal research. The use of the media as a source in legal research is supported by Hutchinson and Duncan (2012) who referred to it when listing

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important secondary sources in legal scholarship literature that includes texts, journal articles, government reports, policy documents, law reform documents and media reports. Zago (2005) emphasised that secondary sources, such as the media, were the best friends of a legal researcher as they, in most instances, provide a starting point and a framework that a researcher could use to understand the subject. The value of secondary sources is that they contain 'expert analysis', references to primary law such as cases, statutes and regulations, and will also include other resources such as governmental reports, statistics, and other secondary sources' (Zago 2005:3). Furthermore, Bischoff (2014) added that in legal research, the backgrounds of parties have always been an essential aspect of litigation. This information about individuals or companies can be found on social networks and media, where people knowingly or unknowingly share a lot of information.

According to Gumede (2014), the media, also known as the fourth estate, is an especially important pillar in a young democracy in countries such as South Africa. Its role is to strengthen and consolidate the fledgling democracy. The country tasks the media with giving practicality to Section 16(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which proffers the right to freedom of expression to all citizens of the country, including the freedom of the press and other media, freedom to receive or impart information or ideas, and academic and scientific freedom, among others (South Africa 1996).

South African jurisprudence relies on the media to provide practicality to its open justice aspirations. The principle of open justice holds the country's courts to a higher standard that seeks to ensure that justice is not only done, but also seen to be done (Biber 2019; Milo & Stein 2013). It is through the media that many members of the public can see justice at work. Many South Africans are able to keep abreast of developments in cases that involve prominent personalities through the media (Mlambo 2014). The media also provides a platform for South Africans to engage in discussions and debates about the nature of the justice system they would prefer. Through media debates and reports, many South Africans get to learn about the intricacies of the legal system and proceedings (Biber 2019; Milo & Stein 2013).

Despite the undeniable importance of the media for South African democracy (Gumede 2014) and jurisprudence (Biber 2019), it is not clear if scholars, including law students, cite media sources in their academic publications. Information on the extent and types of media sources cited by legal scholars seems to be limited. It is not clear if a relationship exists between the citation and circulation of media sources and whether circulation can lead to more citations and vice versa. Furthermore, the information on which media sources are the most cited remains scant. Therefore, this article sought to examine the media as a scholarly source in legal education with a particular focus on the "old media", that is, the print media (newspapers and the magazines) and broadcast media (TV and radio).

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Determine the citation of media by law students in South African public law schools
- Locate the origin of the media cited by law students in South African public law schools
- Prepare a list of top cited newspapers, TV and radio, and magazines by students in South African public law schools.
- Determine the relationship between academic and public impact

2 Contextual setting

This contextual setting touches on legal education and law library schools and will be discussed in this section.

2.1 Legal education in South African public law schools

The legal system in South Africa has its origins in Roman-Dutch law, which was imported to South Africa from the Netherlands in 1652 with the arrival of Dutch colonisers (Greenbaum 2009; Iya 2001). Legal education in the country was launched through Act 12 of 1858 for regulating the admission of barristers, attorneys, notaries, and conveyancers, which made it mandatory for legal scholars in the Cape Colony to obtain one of two legal certificates to be admitted as an attorney or advocate (Church 1998).

The University of Cape Town is often credited with starting the first law school in the country in 1858 (du Plessis 2019). Most of the universities have since 1994 been merged by the South African Government Department of Higher Education, for example, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, North-West University, and University of Johannesburg (Greenbaum 2009).

All public law schools offer the *Baccalureus Legum*, also referred to as the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree, as either a four-year degree or an extended five-year degree (Greenbaum, 2009). In some LLB qualifications, students are required to complete a mini research report. After completion of an LLB, a student can enrol for a *Magister Legum*, also known as the Master of Laws (LLM). This can be through a dissertation or through a mini dissertation. The final qualification that one can obtain differs as some institutions offer a Doctor of Laws (LLD) or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) which requires a thesis to be submitted (Iya 2001).

2.2 Public law library schools

Bangani (2018) stated that all law schools retain a library either as part of the main university library or as a semi-autonomous entity reporting to the central library management. Information gleaned from the websites of South African libraries further reflects that access to newspapers and magazines in these libraries is provided in print or electronically. For print newspapers and magazines, academic libraries purchase these daily from a service provider, and access is mostly provided inside the library. In terms of electronic access, academic libraries subscribe to various databases such as PressReader, which provides access to newspapers and magazines from around the world, AllAfrica, SA Media (South African newspaper clippings), and NewsBank (provides archives of media publications to libraries) (Ndou & Mojapelo 2019). These databases provide access to international regional, national, and local newspapers. Therefore, legal students have access to newspapers and magazines in print and/or electronic format.

3 Literature review

The literature review shall focus on research conducted to determine (1) the citation of media by students, (2) to determine the relationship between newspaper coverage and academic citations in different domains, (3) to establish the relationship between academic and public impact, and (5) to identify the gaps in the literature regarding lists of top-cited media and the country of origin of the media used.

Some of the reviewed studies sought to determine whether there was a relationship between a newspaper coverage and academic citations in different domains such as sports sciences (Anderson, Odom, Gray, Jones, Christensen, Hollingshead, Hadfield, Evans-Pickett, Frost, Wilson, Davidson & Seeley 2020), biomedical studies (Dumas-Mallet, Garenne, Boraud and Gonon 2020), drug and alcohol dependence (Palamar & Strain 2021), sciences (Fanelli 2013) and substance use (Palamar & Strain 2021). All of these studies found positive correlations between newspaper coverage and academic citations. However, Fanelli (2013) found that the relationship may be stronger in certain countries compared to others and language may also play a key role. Palamar and Strain (2021) added that the extent of this relationship may also be influenced by a domain. Dumas-Mallet et al. (2020) suggested that media coverage in journals with higher impact factors does not influence citations as much as that of journals with lower impact factors. From the data, a strong negative correlation between newspaper circulation and citation was found. The fact that none of the studies above is focused on the citation of media sources in legal Theses and Dissertations (TD) supports the novelty of this study.

Nobles and Schiff (2007) reported that people with an understanding of the law viewed media reporting as simplistic, distorted, or just incorrect, but this view is similar to the relationship between the media and other disciplines such as science, medicine, politics, and social sciences. This study views the media as an important primary source of information in legal research. This is because the media provides current and historical information on a case and can be used to gauge the views of different commentators.

Studies have been conducted to determine the use of the media at universities. Most of the studies tended to focus on newspapers. Newspapers appear to be the dominant media sources preferred by students at universities. Jones (2009), for example, suggested that newspapers could be used in several ways. As primary sources of information, newspapers can be used to examine the coverage of a particular historical event, study how an event was covered by multiple newspapers, to look at regional and cultural differences in coverage, and opinions either of a particular ethnic, racial, or regional community. Freeland and Bailey (2008), Igbeka and Ola (2010), and Kobusingye (2017) examined the use of print newspapers in academic and research libraries and found high usage trends although the reasons for the use of newspapers varied. One researcher who focused on magazines and newspapers was Njeze (2013), who found that students consulted sources for general information such as sports and politics and less on educational information relating to their areas of study.

Several studies focused on the use of TV and radio. Williamson (1988) found that television was ranked fourth, and radio was ranked sixth as an information source. The study found that television was preferred for topics such as holidays and recreation. Furthermore, the study found that TV was not used optimally as an information source and that the respondents were enthusiastic about radio as an information source. Furthermore, Law et al. (2015) found that TV and movies were used in medical education to convey factual information to attain knowledge, facilitate skills acquisition, enrich learning, maintain interest and engagement, encourage debate and discussion, motivate reflection, evoke emotion, and stimulate memory retention.

Gaps found in the literature relate to the country of origin of the media cited by law students and also listings of top cited newspapers, TV and radio, and magazines. This study focused on these two gaps, in addition to other objectives to contribute to knowledge on the subject.

4 Methodology

In this study, 607 Master's and PhD TDs from three law schools in South Africa were analysed. The three law schools were selected because the authors benchmarked their own library collections with those of other top research universities in the country by comparing the use of resources across three different law schools. Therefore, the sampling technique used was purposive sampling. The selected TDs were completed from 2014 to 2018. Data were collected using three Excel spreadsheets, each representing a law school. Then searches were conducted in each of the law school's institutional repositories and all legal TDs were listed on each of the corresponding spreadsheets. Each of the spreadsheets initially had 19 columns, which were title of thesis/dissertation, author, year of completion, university, number of references, titles of all journals cited, number of journals cited, newspapers and news sites, magazines, TV and radio, number of books cited, number of South African case law citations, number of foreign case law citations (this referred to case law of other countries), number of South African statutes citations, number of foreign statutes citations (this referred to statutes of other countries), number of international instrument citations (this included international legislation, international case law, international conventions, international reports and all legal documents associated with international bodies such as the African Union, European Union and United Nations number of theses and dissertations cited, number of internet sites cited, and others (under 'others', all forms of documents not listed under the various categories such as posters, PowerPoint presentations, manuals and course materials). Three more columns were added later for the country of origin of the newspaper or news site, TV or radio, and magazine, to capture data about the origin of the documents. The TDs were then downloaded individually and each of their reference lists was analysed. Information was captured in Excel spreadsheets according to the different columns. Data collection was done from December 2019 to August 2020.

The sources cited in the media were then isolated for further analysis. Graphs and tables were created using Excel functionality and according to the objectives of the study.

To determine the relationship between academic and public impact, data on the circulation of top newspapers and magazines were sourced from the Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa (ABC) reports from 2014 to 2018. The ABC only lists the best South African newspapers and magazines. As such, 19 South African newspapers and 2 magazines appeared on the ABC list. Newspapers were the Mail and Guardian, Business Day, Sunday Times, City Press, Sowetan, Star, Citizen, Cape Times, Rapport, Beeld, Daily Dispatch, Daily News, Witness, Die Burger, Cape Argus, Weekend Argus, Mercury, Herald, and Pretoria News, while the two magazines were Farmers' Weekly and Financial Mail. The ABC statistics are reported quarterly, therefore, the circulation figures of the 19 newspapers and 2 magazines from quarter 1 of 2014 until quarter 4 of 2018 were combined to come up with one figure for each year. The citations of 21 newspapers and magazines' citations were then compared using the SPSS Spearman's correlation analysis. This study is not the first to use Spearman's correlation to test the relationship between academic impact (citation) and public impact (circulation). Singh and Ravikumar (2018a) also used this test to compare the citations from the Financial Times newspaper with the circulation.

Recent cases in South African courts, including the cases of Oscar Pistorius (Biber 2019; Moseneke 2018) and Henri Van Breda (Milo 2017), affirmed the critical role of the old media in the dissemination of legal information. This did not affect social media, which does not often require expert legal analysis and knowledge, hence interest in the old media in this study (Bischoff 2014).

5 Findings

The findings are aligned with the objectives as outlined in the introduction.

5.1 Citation of media by law students

Figure 1 shows that journals, books, case law, internet sites, and legal instruments are the most cited sources in legal TD, while media is among the least cited sources together with TD and conference papers. In this study, the media made up 1.7% (or 1639 of 95851) of all citations in legal TDs.

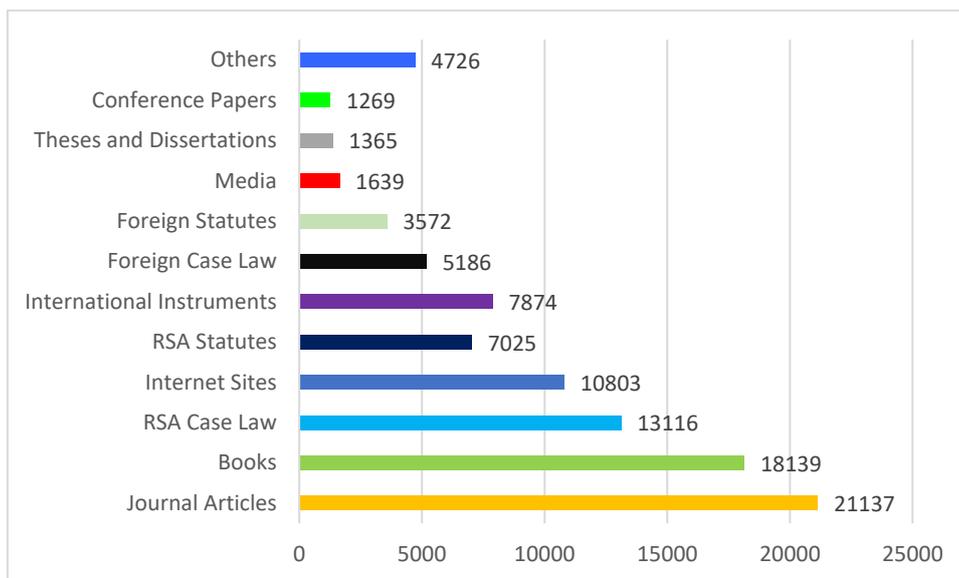


Figure 1 Extent of media citations by law students

Further analysis of media citations was performed in Figure 2. Newspapers and news sites make up the bulk of media citations with 74.5% (1221 out of 1639), followed by TV and radio with 15.3% (250 out of 1639), and magazines at 10.3% (168 out of 1639).

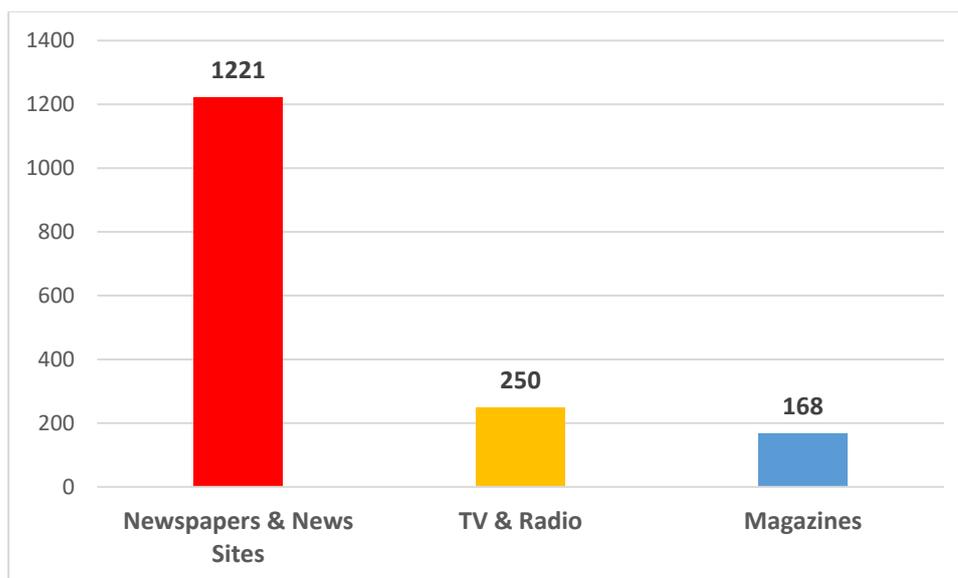


Figure 2: Different media cited by students

5.2 Origin of the media cited by the law student

In total, 316 media titles were cited by students. Geographically, the following countries were represented by at least three titles: South Africa (70), United States (51), Nigeria (27), United Kingdom (26), Zimbabwe (20), Kenya (11), Botswana (8), India (8), China (8), Malawi (6), Australia (5), Canada (5), Uganda (4), Switzerland (4), Egypt (4), Zambia (3) and Tanzania (3).

Table 2 shows that in terms of the country of origin of the citations, most of the citations came from media sources based in South Africa with 38.6%, followed by the United Kingdom with 17.4%, the United States with 17.2% and Nigeria at 5.3%. Continentally, most of the citations were from African countries with 55.9% of all media citations, followed by the United States of America with 19.5%, Europe with 19%, while Asia and Australasia combined had 5.6% media citations.

Table 1 Origins of media sources cited by law students

| Africa | Citations | America | Citations | Asia & Australasia | Citations | Europe | Citations |
|--------------|------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| South Africa | 633 | United States | 282 | New Zealand | 19 | United Kingdom | 285 |
| Nigeria | 86 | Canada | 28 | China | 16 | Switzerland | 4 |
| Zimbabwe | 59 | Trinidad and Tobago | 4 | India | 15 | Israel | 3 |
| Botswana | 40 | Chile | 22 | Qatar | 15 | Turkey | 3 |
| Kenya | 35 | Guyana | | Australia | 14 | Austria | 2 |
| Uganda | 15 | Jamaica | 2 | Brunei | 3 | Northern Ireland | 2 |
| Malawi | 13 | Total | 320 | Malaysia | 2 | Scotland | 2 |
| Tanzania | 9 | | | Pakistan | 2 | Spain | 2 |
| Sudan | 6 | | | Saudi Arabia | 2 | Italy | 2 |
| Egypt | 4 | | | China-Taiwan | 1 | Belgium | 1 |
| | | | | | | Germany | 1 |
| Zambia | 4 | | | Japan | 1 | France | 1 |
| | | | | Singapore | 1 | Ireland | 1 |
| Eswatini | 2 | | | Thailand | 1 | Israel | 1 |
| Namibia | 2 | | | Total | 92 | Netherlands | 1 |
| Algeria | 1 | | | | | Total | 311 |
| Angola | 1 | | | | | | |
| Ethiopia | 1 | | | | | | |
| Ghana | 1 | | | | | | |
| Lesotho | 1 | | | | | | |
| Rwanda | 1 | | | | | | |
| Senegal | 1 | | | | | | |
| Sierra Leone | 1 | | | | | | |
| Total | 916 | | | | | | |

5.3 Newspapers, TV and radio and magazines

This section of the findings is subdivided into three subsections dedicated to the various media types.

5.3.1 Top-cited newspapers

Similarly, to citations, most of the top cited newspapers are from South Africa, as reflected in Table 3. Other countries represented are the United States with four newspapers on the list, Nigeria with three newspapers, the United Kingdom with three newspapers, Botswana with two, and Zimbabwe with one.

The left-leaning Mail and Guardian of South Africa was the top cited newspaper, followed by Business Day, then the United Kingdom's Guardian Newspaper and the United States of America's New York Times. News media sites also appeared among the most cited by Independent Online, News24, Moneyweb, and Reuters. The first three all originated from South Africa, while the latter has its roots in the United Kingdom.

Table 2 Newspapers and news media

| Newspapers and news media | Country | Citations |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Mail and Guardian | South Africa | 98 |
| Business Day | South Africa | 93 |
| Guardian | United Kingdom | 91 |
| New York Times | United States | 72 |
| Independent Online | South Africa | 56 |
| Daily Maverick | South Africa | 44 |
| Telegraph | United Kingdom | 28 |
| Independent | United Kingdom | 22 |
| Times | South Africa | 22 |
| Sunday Times | South Africa | 22 |
| News24 | South Africa | 20 |
| Reuters | United States | 20 |
| City Press | South Africa | 18 |
| Sowetan | South Africa | 15 |
| Sunday Independent | South Africa | 15 |
| Citizen | South Africa | 14 |
| Huffington Post | United States | 14 |
| Star | South Africa | 14 |
| Washington Post | United States | 14 |
| Sunday Standard | Botswana | 12 |
| Vanguard Newspaper | Nigeria | 12 |
| Herald Newspaper | Zimbabwe | 11 |
| Mmegi | Botswana | 11 |
| Moneyweb | South Africa | 11 |
| This Day | Nigeria | 11 |
| Cape Times | South Africa | 9 |
| Punch Newspapers | Nigeria | 9 |

5.3.2 Top cited TV and radio sources

Contrary to the most cited newspapers above, the top two cited TV and radio sources as shown in Table 4 do not originate from South Africa, with South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) TV only appearing at number three. The next TV station of South African origin, eNCA, only appears as the seventh most cited TV source. The list is dominated by television, with Capital FM, Voice of America, Cape Talk, 9 News and CKN Nigeria.

Table 3: TV and radio sources cited at least twice

| TV and radio source | Country | Source |
|---|--------------------------|--------|
| British Broadcasting Corporation | United Kingdom | 90 |
| Cable News Network | United States of America | 40 |
| South African Broadcasting Corporation TV | South Africa | 20 |
| Canadian Broadcasting Corporation | Canada | 15 |
| Al-Jazeera | Qatar | 14 |
| Australian Broadcasting Corporation | Australia | 10 |
| eNCA | South Africa | 10 |
| Capital FM | Kenya | 8 |
| Caribbean News Agency | South Africa | 7 |
| Bloomberg | United States | 6 |
| Voice of America | United States | 4 |
| Cape Talk | South Africa | 3 |
| 9 News | Australia | 2 |
| CKN Nigeria | Nigeria | 2 |
| Consumer News and Business Channel | United States | 2 |
| Global News | Canada | 2 |

5.3.3 Top cited magazines

Interestingly, the two magazines most cited by law students, in Table 5, follow the same pattern as TV and radio. The most cited magazine originated from United Kingdom and the second one from United States. The South African magazines occupied the third and fourth positions, respectively. Only four countries are represented in this list, which are South Africa represented by six magazines, United States with five magazines, United Kingdom with two magazines and Austria with one magazine.

Special focus magazines were in farming (Farmers Weekly), business and economy (for example, Financial, Mail, and Economist), engineering (Engineering News), religion (Islam Today), mining (Mining Weekly), security (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Magazine), and politics, for example, Time Magazine dominated the list of cited magazines. Newsweek, New Yorker Magazine, and New York Times Magazine are the only magazines that can be considered more general in nature.

Table 4 Magazines cited at least two times

| Magazine | Country | Citations |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Economist | United Kingdom | 18 |
| Times | United States of America | 11 |
| Financial Mail | South Africa | |
| 18Mining Weekly | South Africa | 10 |
| New York Times Magazine | United States | 13 |
| Farmers Weekly | South Africa | 12 |
| New Yorker Magazine | United States | 13 |

| | | |
|--|----------------|----|
| Engineering News | South Africa | 12 |
| Intellectual Asset Management (Iam) Magazine | United States | 10 |
| Islam Today | South Africa | 11 |
| Mining Review Africa | South Africa | 10 |
| New African Magazine | United Kingdom | 2 |
| Newsweek | United States | 2 |
| OSCE Magazine | Austria | 2 |

5.4 Relationship between academic and public impact

To test the relationship between academic and public impact, SPSS Spearman correlations were used to test the citations of certain South African newspapers to their circulations. Only newspapers or magazines whose circulation figures were available could be tested. Spearman's correlation analysis was used following Rumsey's guidelines in interpreting the data (Rumsey, 2011). Spearman is often used to evaluate a relationship between two variables or two sets of data. According to Rumsey (2011), correlations can be interpreted by determining whether R is closest with +1 denoting a positive relationship or -1 denoting a negative relationship (Rumsey 2011). Meaning that the closer the results are to +1, the stronger the relationship; 0 means there is no relationship between variables, while a negative denotes a negative relationship.

Table 6 shows the results of this test. The relationship between academic impact (for which citations were used as proxy) and public impact (for which circulation was used as proxy) was found to be positive but weak at close to 0.4.

Table 5 Spearman's Correlation of citation vs circulation

| | | VAR00005 | VAR00006 |
|----------------|-------------------------|----------|----------|
| Spearman's rho | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .201 |
| | VAR00005 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .383 |
| | N | 21 | 21 |
| | Correlation Coefficient | .201 | 1.000 |
| | VAR00006 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .383 | . |
| | N | 21 | 21 |

6 Discussions

This study sought to determine the impact of media on student research work at the university level in South Africa. This section of the study focuses on discussions based on the findings. The section is organised according to the themes emanating from the study objectives as follows.

6.1 Citation of media by law students

It is clear from the results of this study that the media is the least cited information sources by law students. This finding is in agreement with previous studies in other domains that listed media sources among the least cited by TDs of students (Iroaganachi, Itsekor & Osinulu 2014; Kousha and Thelwall 2017). In contrast to the study of the United Kingdom by Kousha and Thelwall (2017) and Meyer (2018), there is no noticeable increase in the citations of media sources in this study over the years. It is possible, as Kousha and Thelwall (2017), Krtalic and Hasenay (2012), and Meyer (2018) suggested, that media sources are more popular in certain fields compared to others. In fact, a study by Ravikumar and Agrahari (2015) and Singh and Ravikumar (2018a) also found that the media sources were not popular citation sources in the field of law. In the subsequent study, it was found that the Financial Times newspaper was not a very popular source among legal

scholars. In fact, Law placed number eight out of ten fields when comparing the extent of citations of this newspaper in ten fields. In Ravikumar and Agrahari (2015), it placed better at number seven out of twenty-six fields. Njeze (2013) also found that students do not often consult newspapers for scholarly purposes.

There are many reasons why legal students may not find newspapers appealing for citations in their TD. 1) There is a limit to citing media sources in legal studies, since these are not peer-reviewed. Not all legal researchers or supervisors approve of the use of media as sources of information. Liebler and Liebert (2012) and Nobles and Schiff (2007), for example, cautioned jurists against relying on media sources. 2) Facts in media sources are often clouded by the opinions of the writers (Nobles & Schiff, 2007). Some students may find it difficult to trust media sources due to this weakness. Cases have been reported to the Media Ombudsman for false and misleading stories which has seen stories being retracted, therefore, casting doubt on the information in the media (van Rooyens 2011). In addition to credibility concerns, there are authenticity concerns as Gellert (2019) found that there have been instances where newspapers have been seen as allowing advertisers to format their advertisements in a way that appear to be factual and authentic news articles. 3) Information presented in media sources is often anecdotal, not properly researched, and coming from unnamed sources, making it difficult to verify (Nobles & Schiff 2007). 4) Online access to newspapers is still an emerging phenomenon in most university libraries that have provided access to print copies in the past. There is also the high cost of subscription to online newspapers, which may be beyond the reach of some libraries. Despite this, however, the findings of this study point to the media as an important but not indispensable source of information for law students.

According to the findings, newspapers are the dominant source compared to magazines, radio, and TV media, especially in the South African context. Possible reasons for this include the fact that newspapers are the fastest print media that publish breaking news and the fact that compared to magazines, newspapers are more readily available in database sources, for example SA Media and from free newspaper websites, for example, Independent Newspapers Online. However, this will require further research, as no similar studies could be found for comparison.

6.2 Country of origin of the media cited by law students

In terms of the geographical location of the media sources cited, the study reflects that most emanated from South Africa followed by the United Kingdom, United States of America, and Nigeria. This is consistent with previous findings by Fanelli (2013), Meyer (2018), Ravikumar and Agrahari (2015), and Singh and Ravikumar (2018a; 2018b). Meyer (2018) suggested that the geography of the newspaper in relation to the geographic location of the citing author is important. Put differently, studies completed in South Africa, for example, are likely to cite more newspapers from the country compared to those from other countries. This was further demonstrated in Singh and Ravikumar's (2018a; 2018b) study which showed that the Financial Times newspaper was well cited in United States and United Kingdom. Although the newspaper is based in the United Kingdom, it has core editorial offices in the United States of America. Ravikumar and Agrahari (2015) also found that Indian newspapers were mainly cited by Indian institutions. The findings of this study further suggest that this may also translate to continents, as more than 55% of all media citations in this study emanated from African countries. However, it proved difficult to locate other studies for comparison purposes.

6.3 Top-cited media

Interestingly, the domination of South African newspapers also translates to the top cited newspapers, although foreign magazines, TV, and radio sources occupy the top and second position on the list of top cited sources in these two categories. There are two possible explanations for this. First, this may be due to the poor quality of South African magazines, radio and TV media. Another possible reason could be a reflection of a disconnect between the general public and the educated classes in South Africa. Although radio and television remain the most popular form of media among the public (Wasserman, 2020), scholars seem to rely on the print media for their research. In addition, existing databases found in libraries do not have much in terms of audio content such as radio or TV media, as this is an area that has not been given much consideration by database suppliers. This will require further studies to be better understood.

6.4 Relation between Academic and public interest

In correlating citations with circulation data, this study found a positive correlation between citations and circulations. This appears to agree with several previous studies by Anderson *et al.* (2020); Dumas Mallet *et al.* (2020); Fanelli, (2013); Palamar and Strain (2021); Ravikumar and Agrahari (2015). However, this comparison should be considered with some caution for the first four studies, as they focused on whether media mentions lead to more citations. The findings are similar to those of Ravikumar and Agrahari (2015), who also found a weak but positive correlation between citations and circulations. However, the results which found a positive correlation between citations and circulation results can be

interpreted as a strong rebuttal of Singh and Ravikumar (2018a), whose findings determined a negative correlation between citations and circulations.

7 Conclusion

This study sought to determine to what extent the old media serve as scholarly sources of information in terms of legal education. Based on the findings of the study, the study concludes that the sources of information are rarely used by law students. Compared to other secondary sources of information such as journals and books, old media is among the least cited. This is because media sources of information do not go through the rigorous peer review process, and this leads to their limited appeal for scholarly use. This conclusion also characterises the findings of previous studies contacted by other scholars, notably Njeze (2013); Ejima (2014); Chowdhury and Halder (2016), among others. Regarding the origin of the media cited by law students, it is concluded that the country where the students cite the sources contributes more sources, as is the case for South Africa, followed by other major economy countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This conclusion is supported in the literature by Fanelli (2013) who indicated that usage rates may be influenced by other dynamics such as diction. On the list of the top-cited newspapers, television and radio stations, and magazines, the study concludes that prominent and reputable media house channels appeal more to researchers than sources from barely known media. In this instance, the Mail & Guardian, Business Day (South Africa), Guardian (UK), and New York Times (United States of America) topped the list of newspapers and news media, while Cape Times (South Africa) and Punch Newspapers (Nigeria) were at the bottom of the list. On television and radio, the BBC, CNN, and to some extent SABC TV were on the top, while Global News (Canada) is among the bottom of the top cited media. In regard to magazines, Economist (United Kingdom), Time Magazine (United States of America), and Financial Mail (South Africa) were on the top of the most cited, while the New African Magazine (United Kingdom), Newsweek (United States of America), and OSCE Magazine (Austria) were on the bottom. With the proliferation of new media and the presence of most media houses online, citation impact is likely to further grow as access is enhanced.

Regarding the determination of the relationship between academic and public impact, the study concludes that there was a positive but weak association between circulations and citations. This conclusion links well to that of Ravikumar and Agrahari (2015), while the results of a study conducted by Singh and Ravikumar (2018) depicted a negative correlation between citations and circulation rates.

These findings have implications for media houses, who may want to consider paying special attention to the credibility of their information to enhance access and citation by law students. In addition, an expansion in content coverage may enhance the use of information by law students for academic purposes. The emergency of digital sources of information (new media), which may be complementary and still owned by the same media houses, may also imply that supervisors and promoters of law research studies should equally have a mind shift and embrace the use of media for academic purposes. Librarians should also provide more guidance on how to cite such sources of information.

The focus of this study was on an old media citation by law students in South Africa. It is recommended that a study of media citations in other disciplines should be conducted, to be able to come up with findings that are broader in scope.

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