

Responsible Journalism Network: Impacts and Performance of a University Social Responsibility Program

Red de periodismo responsable: impactos y desempeño de un programa de responsabilidad social universitaria



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Received: 12/07/2024 - Accepted: 27/09/2024 - Early access: 29/10/2024 - Published: 01/01/2025

Recibido: 12/07/2024 - Aceptado: 27/09/2024 - En edición: 29/10/2024 - Publicado: 01/01/2025

Abstract:

This study analyzes the impact and performance of a socially responsible journalists' network. The findings were obtained following their participation in a training program, managed as part of a university's social responsibility strategy in collaboration with a business school, private companies, and a third-sector organization.

Resumen:

El presente estudio analiza el impacto y desempeño de una red de periodistas socialmente responsables. Los resultados se han obtenido después de su participación en un programa formativo, gestionado como estrategia de responsabilidad social universitaria de una escuela de negocios en alianza con la empresa privada y una organización del tercer sector. En el estudio

How to cite this article:

Ramírez-Lozano, J. P. and Rojas-Valdez, K. (2025). Responsible Journalism Network: Impacts and Performance of a University Social Responsibility Program. *Doxa Comunicación*, 40, pp. 531-555.

<https://doi.org/10.31921/doxacom.n40a2740>



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Surveys were conducted with 120 journalists from various regions of Peru. The results indicate that the responsible journalism training had a positive impact on the professional practice of the participants, enabling them to apply the knowledge gained in both their personal and professional lives. Among the study's conclusions, the role of academia, the private sector, and the third sector in organizing and managing these programs from a social responsibility perspective is emphasized, generating shared benefits and a positive impact for all involved.

Keywords:

Responsible journalism; university social responsibility; training; journalists; university.

se realizaron encuestas aplicadas a 120 periodistas de diversas regiones del Perú. En cuanto a los resultados, la capacitación en periodismo responsable resultó tener un impacto positivo en el ejercicio profesional de los periodistas capacitados, quienes en la práctica lograron incorporar conocimientos y pusieron en práctica dentro de desempeño personal y profesional. Entre las conclusiones del estudio se destaca el rol de la academia, la empresa privada y el tercer sector en la organización y gestión de este tipo de programas en beneficio compartido desde un enfoque de responsabilidad social; los cuales generan impacto positivo para todos los involucrados.

Palabras clave:

Periodismo responsable; responsabilidad social universitaria; capacitación; periodistas; universidad.

1. Introduction

Responsible journalism is a cornerstone of communication and information. It refers to the ethical and professional responsibility journalists hold when reporting and conveying news and events to the public (de la Calle Maldonado et al., 2021). This practice involves the pursuit of truth, thorough fact-checking, objective data handling, impartiality, and transparency in the presentation of information (Barrientos-Báez et al., 2022; de la Calle Maldonado et al., 2021; Rivas-de-Roca, 2020; Pérez-Escoda and Pedrero Esteban, 2021).

These characteristics of good journalism are crucial for journalists to provide accurate and reliable information, particularly to shape public opinion, enabling citizens to make informed decisions and engage in democratic life (Pérez-Escolar and Herrero-Diz, 2023). Responsible journalism also plays a key role in holding public and private powers accountable, as journalists act as watchdogs and witnesses to potential abuses and corruption within society (Rivas-de-Roca, 2020).

Socially responsible journalism should promote sustainability by considering the impacts that companies and organizations may have on future generations as a result of their operations (Brundtland, 1987). This involves fostering understanding and promoting the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda through journalistic practices (Ghazouani, 2022; Sălcudean et al., 2023), thereby driving national development plans. In this context, both traditional and non-traditional media, and particularly journalists, play a crucial role (Medranda-Morales et al., 2022) in reaching a wide audience (Lindsay et al., 2021) by providing accurate and timely information.

Universities also play a crucial role. Beyond providing journalism education, these institutions can promote the training of responsible journalists across various specialties. One effective approach is through University Social Responsibility programs (Vallaey, 2018). Such initiatives enable journalists to gain a deeper understanding of the topics they report on, while also, under the framework of journalistic ethics (Arroyave Cabrera and Garcés-Prettel, 2023; Gade et al., 2017), fostering positive change and creating sustainable impacts on society (Guzel and Gonden, 2022).

Universities can create alliances with other organizations to promote this socially responsible and sustainable approach (Gorpe and Oksuz, 2023; Ramirez Lozano et al., 2022). Thus, this active role is assumed to provide solutions to social, economic

and environmental problems (Caroll, 2011). The professional training received is not enough (Wilderman et al., 2018), but requires continuous and innovative training that incorporates new skills and knowledge relevant to new global trends and concerns (Campos Domínguez, 2021; López-García et al., 2017; Martín-Antoranz et al., 2019; Nurlatifah and Mutmainnah, 2021). For example, in the attention to environmental problems (Medranda-Morales et al., 2022; Robie, 2023), in the care of water resources (Association of Social Communicators Calandria and Swiss Cooperation SDC, 2021), in the ethical awareness of how news is reported (Roskar et al., 2017; Shcerr et al., 2019), in social problems (Hautakangas and Ahva, 2018), among others.

Likewise, the practice of University Social Responsibility (USR) requires educational institutions to engage with various societal actors and stakeholders. In this context, a network of responsible journalists, trained through a USR program, can serve as advocates for socially responsible and sustainable development. Accordingly, a training program was developed for journalists, designed and managed from a USR perspective. This initiative was led by a business school in collaboration with a media company and a nonprofit organization in Peru. The training program's impact on the participants' journalistic practices demonstrated high social relevance, reflecting its effectiveness in fostering good journalistic practices grounded in ethics and social responsibility. In addition, it emphasized the importance of promoting social responsibility and sustainability. The program also stands as a model of partnership, showcasing successful collaboration between academia, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations, in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, which focuses on partnerships to achieve sustainable development.

1.1. The role of University Social Responsibility (USR) in society

University social responsibility refers to the commitment and contribution of higher education institutions to society and sustainable development (Vallaey, 2018). It encompasses the promotion of responsible values and practices across all areas, including student education, campus management, and relationships with various societal stakeholders (Gade et al., 2017; Rojas Valdez et al., 2022; Sunardi, 2020). USR is vital because it encourages universities to take an active role in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, while also fostering the training of professionals dedicated to the well-being of their communities.

In this context, a key aspect of USR is the responsibility of universities to train future journalists in responsible journalism, with an emphasis on ethics and social responsibility (Guzel and Gonden, 2022). This involves teaching the principles of truthfulness, impartiality, and transparency in the gathering and presentation of information (Arroyave Cabrera and Garcés-Prettel, 2023). Today, it is more critical than ever for universities to prioritize these principles in the education of future journalists.

In addition, USR practice involves universities recognizing the needs of their stakeholders, including the journalism industry and its member organizations (Ramírez Lozano et al., 2022). As a result, universities can directly support media companies by offering training programs in responsible journalism, with a focus on social responsibility and sustainability. This ensures that professionals are well-equipped to perform effectively in their workplaces (Wilderman et al., 2018). Achieving this goal requires collaboration and agreements with organizations in the sector, enabling universities to integrate relevant skills and knowledge into their teaching processes (Nurlatifah and Mutmainnah, 2021).

Finally, universities can develop programs that directly engage their communities (Ramirez Lozano et al., 2022). A notable example is the Alhambra Source program, in which the University of Southern California recruited and trained community members to report on local events through an online platform (Gerson et al., 2016). This case clearly demonstrates the evolving nature of journalism and highlights one of the key challenges universities will face in the coming years (Sánchez-García et al., 2019). Additionally, the digital revolution presents new challenges, requiring communication professionals to receive ethical training that embraces interculturality (Martín-Antoranz et al., 2019). Technological skills are increasingly in demand (López-García et al., 2017), and universities can play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of journalism (Marta-Lazo et al., 2020). In this context, university social responsibility can support the continuous, up-to-date training of well-rounded, competent professionals while fostering direct collaboration with community members.

1.2. Responsible Journalism Training

Responsible journalism promotes diversity and inclusion in news coverage by addressing issues of societal interest, such as the environmental challenges currently faced by the global population (Medranda-Morales et al., 2022). However, in today's digital landscape, responsible journalism faces additional obstacles. Misinformation and fake news threaten the credibility and trustworthiness of the media. Journalists committed to responsible reporting must verify information, debunk falsehoods using reliable sources, and provide accurate data (Aujla-Sidhu, 2022; Pérez-Escolar and Herrero-Diz, 2023). They must also adapt to new technologies and digital platforms while upholding high standards of quality and ethics (Campos Domínguez, 2021), including the responsible use of artificial intelligence. In this context, the development of programs focused on training responsible journalists is crucial for today's society, as the profession requires individuals dedicated to societal improvement and the well-being of the public. Moreover, the social responsibility of media organizations and the corporate social responsibility of educational institutions not only strengthen partnerships but also help address these emerging challenges (Gorpe and Oksuz, 2023).

For this reason, programs like "Bearing Witness," developed by the Pacific Media Centre, have emerged. In this initiative, journalism students participated in a project that focused on reporting the effects of climate change on the Pacific islands, a region severely impacted by pollution and rising sea levels (Robie, 2023). The program resulted in a series of investigative reports aimed at raising awareness about how these communities, among the most affected by climate change, have had to adapt to maintain their way of life. Moreover, the experience had a profound impact on the participants, many of whom expressed a continued interest in reporting on the issue and became more conscious of the detrimental effects of climate change.

Another example of responsible journalism training is provided by Scherr et al. (2019), who analyzed the effects of a responsible journalism workshop for Swiss journalists. Their findings demonstrated that such programs can effectively raise awareness among communicators about the importance of reporting on suicide responsibly, while also equipping them with the necessary skills to do so in their professional practice. Similarly, Roskar et al. (2017) examined the impact of workshops on responsible media coverage of suicide in Slovenia. By analyzing media reports before and after the workshops, they observed a decrease in the reporting of specific suicide cases, a reduction in the use of the word "suicide" in headlines, and an increase in instances where media coverage included information about helplines or other suicide prevention resources.

The findings presented by Hautakangas and Ahva (2018), who analyzed the Conciliatory Journalism Project, are also noteworthy. This project, carried out in Finland, aimed to collaboratively develop new approaches to reorient journalism in times of social polarization, emphasizing socially responsible journalism, conflict mediation, and online moderation. Research conducted within the project led to the creation of new strategies and methods, which participants presented and reflectively evaluated among their peers.

Furthermore, there are notable examples from Latin America, such as the course “Environmental Journalism and Ecological Awareness about Water,” offered by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in collaboration with the CALANDRIA Association of Communicators (Asociación de Comunicadores Sociales Calandria y Cooperación Suiza COSUDE, 2021). This program, which aimed to train journalists in reporting on water conservation, was attended by journalists from 15 regions of Peru, along with participants from Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, and Bolivia. As a result of the course, the document “Environmental Journalism and Ecological Awareness about Water” (Periodismo ambiental y conciencia ecológica en torno al agua) was published, compiling 51 reports and journalistic chronicles produced by the participants, all focused on water-related issues (Asociación de Comunicadores Sociales Calandria y Cooperación Suiza COSUDE, 2021).

In summary, responsible journalism training programs result in heightened sensitivity among participating journalists (Robie, 2023; Scherr et al., 2019), the development of essential skills and knowledge for accurate reporting on specific topics (Scherr et al., 2019), and, in some cases, the creation of a publication as part of the workshop or program (Asociación de Comunicadores Sociales Calandria y Cooperación Suiza COSUDE, 2021; Hautakangas y Ahva, 2018).

Responsible journalism for the promotion of social responsibility and sustainability

The promotion of responsible journalism offers journalists an opportunity to learn and reflect on their ethical responsibilities in reporting, while also incorporating new concepts based on evolving societal and global trends (Suárez Villegas, 2013). Thus, fostering the principles of social responsibility and sustainability is integral to the practice of good, responsible journalism.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined as the active and voluntary contribution of companies to social, economic, and environmental improvement, with the aim of enhancing their competitiveness, valuation, and added value (ISO 26000). Meanwhile, sustainability refers to the ability to meet current societal needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs (Brundtland, 1987). To achieve this, numerous proposals have been developed to promote a more sustainable society, notably the United Nations’ efforts through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Sălcudean et al., 2023). Responsible journalism plays a key role in supporting national development plans and contributing to sustainable development, as demonstrated by Saudi Arabia’s 2030 agenda (Ghazouani, 2022). However, for people to recognize the environmental impact of their lifestyles, it is essential for society as a whole to fully grasp the severity of the environmental crisis (Zotaj and Buza, 2014).

The media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion on sustainable development (Medranda-Morales et al., 2022; Sălcudean et al., 2023). Since many people rely on the media for information on scientific topics, journalists have a significant impact on how citizens perceive the challenges they face (Lindsay et al., 2021). Therefore, it is essential that journalists possess the necessary knowledge to accurately report on environmental issues and sustainable development, translating complex

scientific information into clear, accessible language that can be easily understood by the general population (Medranda-Morales et al., 2022).

One of the most important tools for increasing professionals' awareness of climate change is the promotion of environmental education. Therefore, universities must contribute to raising environmental awareness by designing curricula that integrate essential knowledge on sustainability and by developing interdisciplinary projects that explore the relationship between society and nature (Vasileva et al., 2021). As a result, it is crucial for young journalists to receive education in environmental matters, enabling them to provide effective coverage of both local and global environmental issues (Zotaj and Buza, 2014).

Sustainability in journalism requires considering ethical and social aspects, as journalists must be aware of their responsibility toward society and the environment and make informed, ethical decisions in their work. Sensationalism and "yellow journalism" should be avoided, while diversity and inclusion in representing different perspectives must be promoted (Vico, 2020). Likewise, promoting sustainable journalistic practices in economic and labor terms is essential. This includes fostering sustainable business models for media outlets and ensuring fair and equitable working conditions for journalists (Durban, 2023). Economic and labor sustainability are crucial for guaranteeing the independence and quality of journalism.

Integrating corporate social responsibility with journalism can significantly influence how people perceive reality. For instance, the focus of a news story can either highlight or downplay CSR issues (Li, 2020). Carroll (2011) explored the relationship between CSR and the media, examining how news coverage can influence corporate CSR behavior. It is also insightful to consider how business news addresses CSR, often adopting different tones before and after economic crises (Furey et al., 2019).

1.3. Impacts of training on journalistic practice

The analysis of the impact of training on journalistic practice has shown that it positively influences both how news is presented and the coverage given to certain topics. Training aimed at professionals in the media industry has been well-documented due to its direct impact on news outlets. For example, responsible journalism workshops have proven effective in raising journalists' awareness of sensitive or socially relevant issues, such as media coverage of suicide cases (Scherr et al., 2019; Roskar et al., 2017). Furthermore, these findings highlight the importance of equipping journalists with the necessary skills to cover such topics, including the use of appropriate guidelines.

Studies related to training on environmental or sustainability issues yield similar results (Ramirez Lozano et al., 2023), albeit on a smaller scale. For example, the "Bearing Witness" project demonstrated effectiveness in promoting journalistic investigations on climate change among two journalism students (Robie, 2023). In addition, Vasileva et al. (2021) conducted a project aimed at raising ecological awareness among journalism students by developing skills in recycling. Their findings indicated that practical workshops can successfully foster a higher level of environmental awareness and interest in eco-friendly products. Thus, training in journalistic practice has proven effective, as communicators prioritize socially relevant issues and how these issues are presented in their professional work.

1.4. Objective of the Training Program “Responsible Journalism Network”

The primary objective of this study is to assess the outcomes of a training program provided to journalists involved in a network of socially responsible journalists. The evaluation of these results does not center on course ratings, participant satisfaction, or perceptions of the courses’ relevance to their training. Instead, it focuses on the following specific objectives (SO):

SO1. Understand the impact of belonging to a network of socially responsible journalists.

SO2. Identify the personal and professional performance associated with being part of a network of socially responsible journalists.

By achieving these objectives, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the formation of a network of socially responsible journalists. The results have been derived from a responsible journalism training program that involved a business school, a private company, and a third-sector organization. These results have proven significant for both the stakeholders and the journalists involved. Likewise, this project and study are linked to Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17). Furthermore, this initiative can serve as a model for other organizations, particularly in the practical and experiential realms. This research may also pave the way for similar studies in this field.

2. Methodology

The study employed a quantitative analytical-descriptive methodology, utilizing surveys administered to journalists who participated in the training program. The program had a maximum capacity of 120 active participants in the Responsible Journalism Network (RJN), with 118 providing valid responses to the survey. This represents a highly representative sample of the total population of journalists who participated in the program.

The program was organized by a renowned business school in partnership with an international organization and one of the leading media groups in Peru. The topics of the training program were developed in collaboration with experts in journalism and sustainability, including four professors (two with doctoral degrees and two with master’s degrees) from academia, as well as four senior professionals from the industry (four invited professionals in senior positions at their respective organizations).

The RJN was established to promote awareness and sensitivity among journalists across all regions of Peru and various media channels, encouraging them to responsibly fulfill their role as advocates for sustainability in the country through ethical and responsible reporting. To become a member of the network, two requirements were set: completion of the training program and the publication of a news article in a media outlet with local or national reach, in written, radio, or audiovisual format.

As part of their participation in the network’s training program, journalists had the opportunity to engage in a responsible journalism training course consisting of four sessions (see Table A1 in the annexes). This included an introductory session aimed at presenting the program, followed by three thematic modules. Each module featured a 1 hour and 55-minute lecture delivered by specialists in sustainability, along with a 45-minute activity related to the topics discussed during the session, which involved group work among participants. The instructors comprised volunteer professors from the Business School and other experts in the fields of social responsibility and sustainability.

In addition, as part of their participation in the program, a contest was held among the participants, allowing them to conduct an accurate and in-depth investigation. The investigation was required to focus on a topic related to various categories within the framework of responsible journalism, emphasizing sustainability. Five categories were established (see Table A2 in the annexes), and the best work received a monetary prize.

To assess the results of the training, an exit survey was administered to the participants. The questionnaire included several questions aligned with the objectives of this study. Prior to implementation, the questionnaire was tested and validated. Three researchers provided expert validation and suggested changes before the questionnaire was tested. A pilot test was conducted with a small group of participants, and no further adjustments were deemed necessary. The final questionnaire was distributed through an online survey using the Google Forms application.

To address the first research objective regarding the impact of belonging to a socially responsible journalism network, the following parameters were established: the perceived impact of being part of this network, the types of social responsibility practiced in their workplaces, how they believe social responsibility should be emphasized in their profession (including important aspects to focus on), and the significance of being a member of a network of socially responsible journalists (referencing the studies by Herrera et al., 2001, and Prasad and Kumar, 2022).

To address the second research objective concerning performance results after the training program, measurements were established at both personal and professional levels. At the personal level, five areas were considered, while at the professional level, 40 areas were identified, encompassing ethical, labor, cultural, political, social, environmental, and economic principles (referencing the studies by Fuller, 2024, and Trommershausen and Karmasin, 2022).

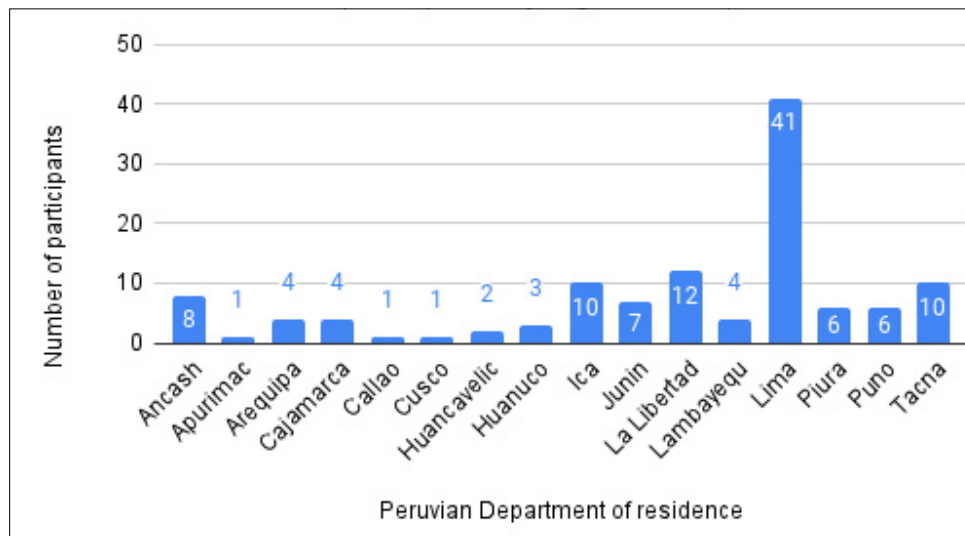
The results obtained from the questionnaire were also triangulated and validated. This process included analyzing the written (qualitative) comments provided by participants, which further supported the findings. In-depth interviews were conducted with some participants to gather their impressions and complement the results. Likewise, information was collected from the academics and specialists involved in this project, providing a more comprehensive analysis related to the research objectives. Furthermore, the information studied and analyzed aligns with the existing literature.

3. Results

The results present the findings from 118 individuals who responded to the survey, which was sent to 120 active participants of the training program within the Network of Socially Responsible Journalists. With a 95% confidence level, the margin of error is 1.2% (Datum, 2024). If a 99% confidence level is applied, the margin of error is 1.5% (Datum, 2024).

The program included participation from journalists across 16 of the 24 regions in Peru (see Figure 1). Notably, the majority of participants were from the Lima Region, which accounted for 34% of the total. La Libertad followed as the second region with the highest representation, contributing 12 participants, or 10% of the total. These results indicate that while a significant percentage of participants hailed from Lima, journalists from most regions in Peru were also represented.

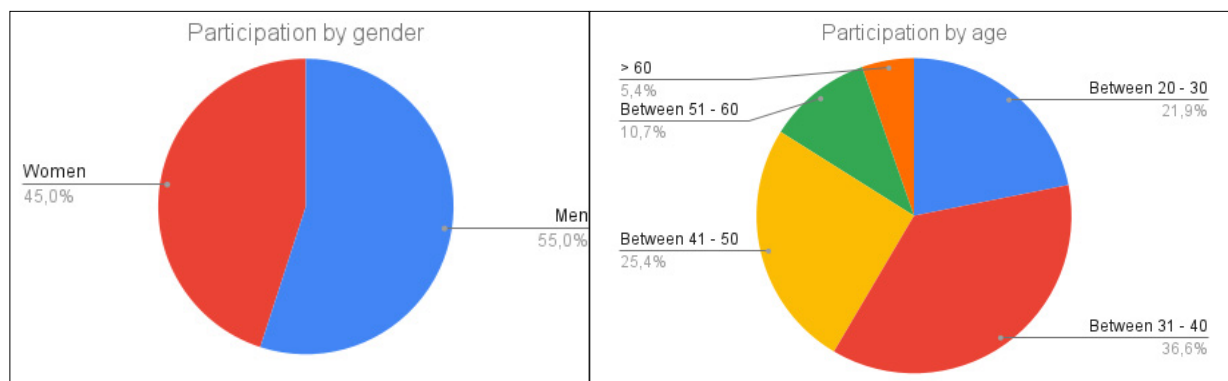
Figure 1. Distribution of participants by regions or departments



Source: author's own creation

The results show that 55% of the participants were men and 45%, women. Therefore, the program had nearly equal participation of both genders (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Distribution of participants by gender and age



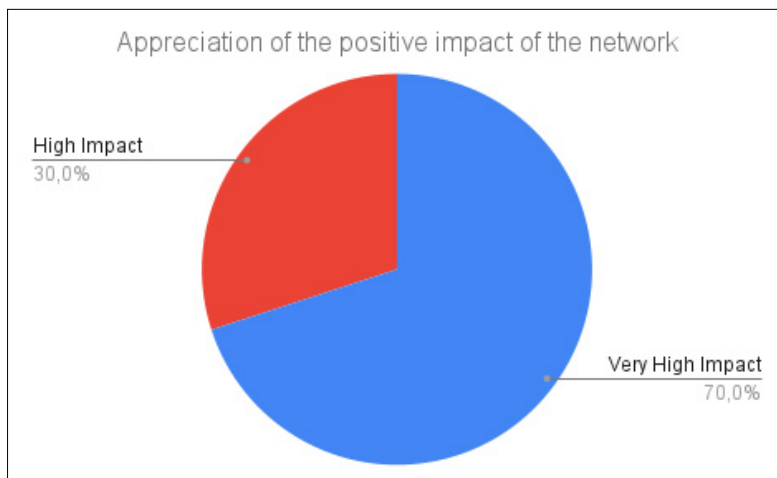
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The results show that most of the participants were between 31 and 50 years old, representing 60% of the total. Another group consisted of individuals between the ages of 20 and 30, representing 21.7% of the participants. Finally, 18.3% of the participants were over the age of 51 (see Figure 2).

Below are the results related to the first research objective, to know the impact of belonging to a network of socially responsible journalists. To measure this, the following parameters were established: the estimation of the impact of being part of this network, the type of social responsibility applied in their workplace, how they should focus on social responsibility in their profession (important aspects in their profession to focus on, considering social responsibility), and the importance of being part of a network of socially responsible journalists.

The answer of the participants show that all feel that their participation in the RJN will have a positive impact on their education. 30% of participants believe it will have a high impact, and 70% believe it will have a very high impact (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Appreciation of the impact of being part of the RJN

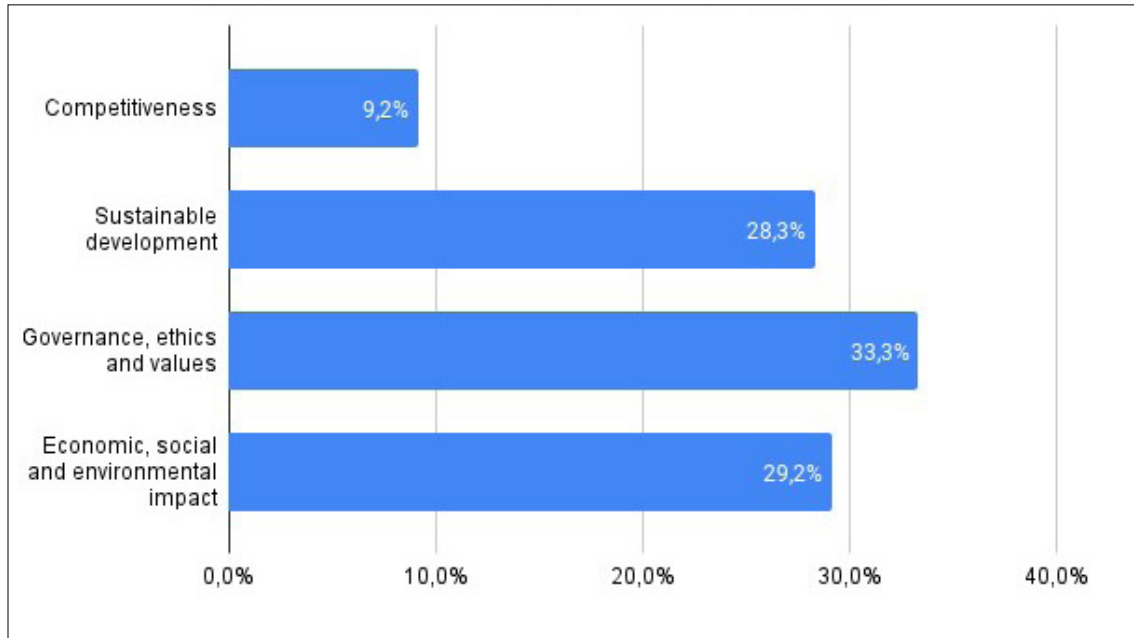


Source: author's own creation

(5 categories were used and the results were only obtained in the two highest ones)

Regarding the type of social responsibility implemented by the companies where the participants work, 33.3% indicated that they apply a model centered on governance, ethics, and values. Meanwhile, 29.2% indicated that the type of social responsibility they apply in their workplace is focused on their economic, social and environmental impact. Furthermore, 28.3% utilize a model based on sustainable development, while 9.2% adhere to a model centered on competitiveness (see Figure 4).

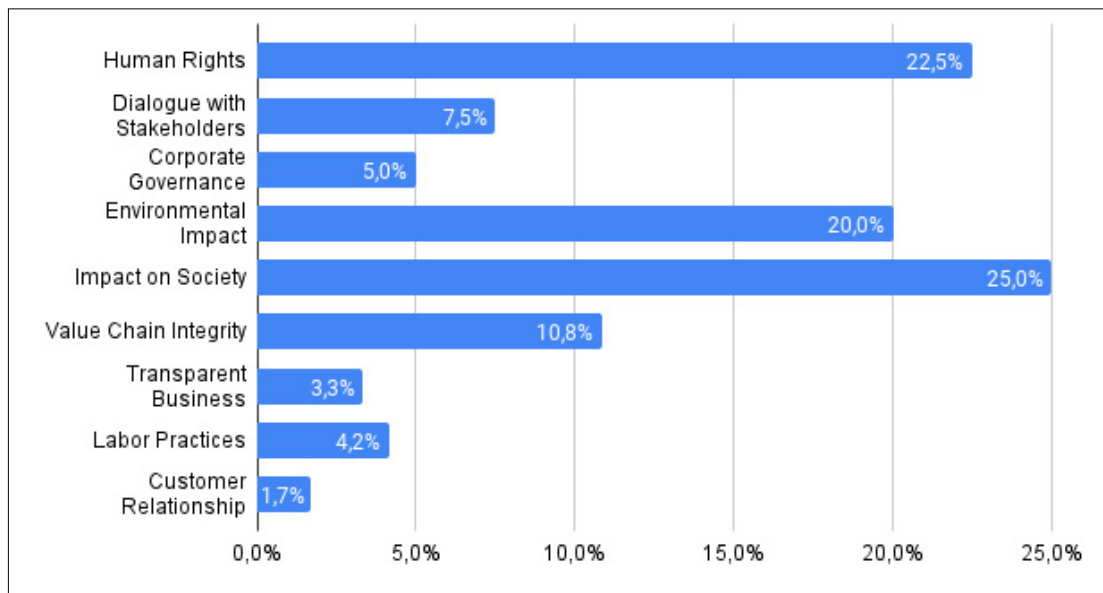
Figure 4. Type of social responsibility applied in the workplace



Source: author's own creation

Participants were asked about the main aspects that should be considered in corporate social responsibility (see Figure 5). They highlighted the impact on society (25%), the environmental impact (20%), and human rights (22.5%). Other aspects considered in corporate social responsibility include the integrity of the value chain (10.8%), dialogue with stakeholders (7.5%), corporate governance (5%), labor practices (4.2%), and customer relations (1.7%).

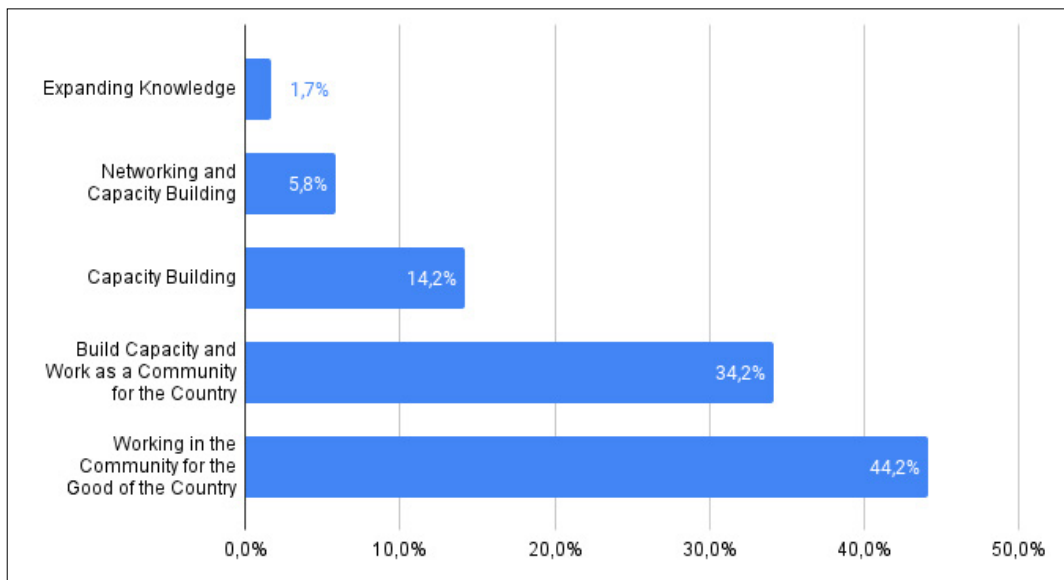
Figure 5. Important aspects in their profession to focus on, considering social responsibility



Source: author's own creation

Regarding the main focus for joining the RJN, two primary motivations stand out (see Figure 6): working in community for the country (44.2%) and enhancing their skills (14.2%). In addition, 34.2% consider that both are central factors for their incorporation into the network. Other motivations included enhancing their skills and networking (5.8%) and expand their knowledge (1.7%).

Figure 6. Importance of being part of a network of socially responsible journalists



Source: author's own creation

Below are the results related to the second research objective, measured at the personal and professional levels. Table 1 shows that the personal performance of the journalists is at a very high level after completing the training program, which has enabled them to become more aware of their professional role. The results show high and very high levels. In the case of women, a larger proportion than men reported levels above “medium”. In this regard, it can be concluded that the results (compliance with the code of ethics of the company where they work, respect for the personal values of others, and living the principles of good journalism) are a consequence of the fact that women journalists have had experiences that make them more realistic and more aware of this type of response, or because they live in social realities that pose challenges to them and they face them in this way.

Table 1. Personal performance of journalists

Level	I comply with the code of ethics of the company where I work		I respect and live my personal values		I respect others' personal values		I live the principles of good journalism		I respect the commitments made	
	Man	Woman	Man	Woman	Man	Woman	Man	Woman	Man	Woman
Very high	31%	23%	34%	27%	32%	27%	32%	26%	31%	25%
High	23%	15%	19%	14%	22%	13%	20%	13%	24%	15%
Medium	2%	7%	2%	4%	1%	5%	3%	6%	1%	4%
Very little										
General total	55%	45%	55%	45%	55%	45%	55%	45%	55%	45%

Source: author's own creation

Table 2 shows very high scores in several areas evaluated after the training program. These areas are related to what it means to be a socially responsible journalist. The “very high” scores are found in the following areas: I respect people's rights, My conduct is ethical, I abide by established contracts, I strive to keep learning, I respect the points of view of my colleagues, I strive to learn new tools, I am aware that the development of my work does not violate human rights, I fulfill my duties and responsibilities in my workplace, My relationship with my colleagues is good, I am aware that my behavior can have a positive or negative impact on society, I live values in my workplace, and I am aware of the impact I can have on future generations. These results provide relevant insights into the behavior of journalists after completing the training program.

Table 2. Professional performance of journalists

Area Evaluated	Very high	High	Medium	Little	Very little
I respect people's rights	62%	25%	12%	2%	0%
My conduct is ethical	59%	25%	14%	2%	0%
I abide by established contracts	58%	28%	12%	2%	0%
I strive to keep learning	57%	29%	13%	2%	0%

I respect the points of view of my colleagues	57%	31%	11%	2%	0%
I strive to learn new tools	55%	30%	14%	2%	0%
I am aware that the development of my work does not violate human rights	54%	31%	14%	2%	0%
I fulfill my duties and responsibilities in my workplace	54%	33%	12%	1%	0%
My relationship with my colleagues is good	53%	34%	12%	2%	0%
I am aware that my behavior can have a positive or negative impact on society	52%	32%	12%	3%	2%
I live values in my workplace	52%	34%	14%	1%	0%
I am aware of the impact I can have on future generations.	51%	31%	16%	2%	0%
I promote anti-bribery and am against corruption	50%	31%	16%	3%	1%
I help my colleagues when they need it	50%	37%	11%	2%	0%
I strive to perform my work with attention to detail	48%	36%	14%	1%	0%
I share relevant and reliable information that everyone should know	48%	34%	14%	2%	2%
I care about educating my colleagues who know less about a subject than I do.	47%	35%	16%	2%	0%
I care about the safety and health of my colleagues	47%	30%	22%	1%	0%
I encourage my colleagues to develop their skills	46%	37%	14%	3%	0%
I add an innovation component to my work	44%	39%	16%	1%	0%
I care about water and energy	44%	36%	17%	3%	0%
I contribute to the development of the region where I live	42%	36%	22%	1%	0%
I promote fair treatment policies	42%	34%	21%	2%	1%
I do my job with excellence	42%	42%	14%	2%	0%

I have a good work-life balance	42%	35%	22%	2%	0%
My commitment to society goes beyond making a profit	39%	37%	19%	5%	0%
I promote the reduction of exploitation of any person	38%	38%	19%	3%	1%
I promote the reduction of child labor and human rights abuses	36%	31%	28%	4%	1%
I am accountable for the work I do	36%	41%	19%	3%	1%
I reduce pollution by using low-pollution transportation	35%	36%	25%	4%	1%
I recycle materials that can be reused	35%	34%	25%	6%	1%
I plant and take good care of plants and green areas	35%	34%	26%	4%	1%
I promote community education initiatives, awareness campaigns, donations, etc.	32%	36%	27%	4%	1%
I support the creation of employment opportunities	31%	27%	29%	10%	3%
I encourage and support religious or cultural activities	29%	31%	32%	6%	3%
I support the dissemination of initiatives to make better use of economic resources or funding	27%	32%	28%	10%	3%
I promote community health and safety initiatives	26%	38%	28%	7%	1%
I do work to help others get out of poverty	22%	25%	27%	19%	6%
I promote programs that reduce poverty	20%	28%	30%	14%	8%
I promote partnerships with community organizations, government agencies, and other groups	20%	34%	23%	17%	6%

Source: author's own creation

4. Discussion

The research conducted has provided deeper insights into the experience of being part of a network of socially responsible journalists. To achieve this, 120 journalists were trained through a program focused on social responsibility and sustainability issues. This university social responsibility training program involved collaboration between a university business school, the

private sector, and a third-sector organization. Below are the results obtained regarding the Network of Socially Responsible Journalists, addressing the two specific research objectives.

Significant findings have emerged regarding the impact of belonging to a network of socially responsible journalists (Herrera et al., 2001; Prasad and Kumar, 2022). Journalists highly value their membership in such networks, as responsible journalism promotes social responsibility and sustainability. As previously indicated, the professional education received is insufficient (Wilderman et al., 2018); continuous and innovative training is essential to incorporate new competencies and relevant knowledge (Campos Domínguez, 2021; López-García et al., 2017; Martín-Antoranz et al., 2019; Nurlatifah and Mutmainnah, 2021). This network equips journalists with professional knowledge on social responsibility and sustainability, enabling them to deliver news with assertive information that addresses current events and the most pressing needs of society and the world (Suárez Villegas, 2013). This, in turn, raises awareness (Lindsay et al., 2021; Zotaj and Buza, 2014). Being part of a network allows individuals to stay connected and updated on current events, improving their ability to inform the public using clear and accessible language (Medranda-Morales et al., 2022).

Regarding the personal and professional performance of a network of socially responsible journalists (Fuller, 2024; Trommershausen and Karmasin, 2022), the areas studied and their current state were observed. The ethical area stands out as fundamental to journalistic practice (Arroyave Cabrera and Garcés-Prettel, 2023; Barrientos-Báez et al., 2022; de la Calle Maldonado et al., 2021; Gade et al., 2017; Rivas-de-Roca, 2020; Pérez-Escoda and Pedrero Esteban, 2021). On the other hand, their professional practice contributes to the generation of socially responsible actions in the political sphere (Pérez-Escolar and Herrero-Diz, 2023; Rivas-de-Roca, 2020). Likewise, a journalist can be a promoter of positive changes in terms of sustainability (Brundtland, 1987; Guzel and Gonden, 2022). A journalist should also help provide information to offer solutions to social, economic, and environmental problems (Caroll, 2011; Hautakangas and Ahva, 2018; Medranda-Morales et al., 2022; Robie, 2023; Roskar et al., 2017; Scherr et al., 2019).

Therefore, a network of socially responsible journalists is a useful tool to establish links in terms of social responsibility and sustainability. This training, framed in a university social responsibility program implemented by a business school, the private sector and a third sector organization, has proven to be enriching for all parties involved and has produced impactful results (Vallaey, 2018). Projects such as this, which are related to SDG 17, allow for the creation of partnerships (Gorpe and Oksuz, 2023; Ramírez Lozano et al., 2022). They also aim to contribute, through the profession, to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations 2030 Agenda (Ghazouani, 2022; S ludean et al., 2023), among others, by significantly strengthening national, regional and sectoral plans. Journalists play a crucial role in shaping public opinion on sustainable development (Medranda-Morales et al., 2022; S ludean et al., 2023). This university social responsibility program is a good example for other organizations to follow, as it generates significant benefits, value or shared value for all stakeholders.

5. Conclusions

The results of the program reflect the positive impact on all participants, both direct beneficiaries and leaders. Journalists learned new concepts that they could apply in their daily work. In addition, they were encouraged to produce content with

a socially responsible approach. The volunteer professors from the business school and the professionals who facilitated the trainings were able to learn more about the context in which Peruvian journalists work. The managing partner organizations achieved their goal of promoting the practice of social responsibility among a target audience of collective interest. This specific case demonstrates that academia can collaborate positively with the private sector and the third sector to carry out a program that generates a culture of responsible journalism, so necessary in populations such as the Peruvian and Latin American, with so many social and ethical challenges and problems.

The participation of professionals from different regions of the country (16 out of 24 regions) made the training inclusive and horizontal, providing opportunities for all. The program had an almost equal gender representation, with 55% men and 45% women, and included participants of different ages: 21.7% were between 20 and 30 years old, 27.5% between 31 and 40 years old, 32.5% between 41 and 50 years old, and 10.8% between 51 and 60 years old.

The impact of the training was rated as “high impact” (30%) and “very high impact” (70%). The types of social responsibility implemented by the companies where the participants work are, in order of importance: governance, ethics and values (33.3%); economic, social and environmental impact (29.2%); sustainable development (28.3%); and competitiveness (9.2%). It is noteworthy that more than one-third of companies still use an outdated approach to what social responsibility encompasses. While this approach is necessary, it does not encompass all aspects of contemporary social responsibility. Therefore, the program has enabled participants to expand their knowledge in order to communicate more effectively on these issues in a transparent, ethical and timely manner, with an appropriate interpretation of the facts. .

Through their participation in the program, participants emphasized the opportunity to be part of a network to work together for the country and to enhance their professional and personal skills. They consider corporate social responsibility important, highlighting the following aspects: impact on society (25%), human rights (22.5%) and environmental impact (20%). According to the results obtained, it is clear that social and human rights aspects are key factors to consider when reporting news, as well as the environmental impact aspect.

After the training program, the journalists' performance was rated at a very high level in the following areas: compliance with the code of ethics of the company where they work, respecting and living their personal values, respecting the personal values of others, living the principles of good journalism and respecting the commitments made. Also, after the training program, very high results were recorded in the following areas: I respect people's rights, My conduct is ethical, I abide by established contracts, I strive to keep learning, I respect the points of view of my colleagues, among others. These results are related to the answers previously marked by the journalists.

After identifying the results, we can see that this model ofUSR demonstrates a significant challenge in continuing to foster greater partnership spaces between universities, private companies and the third sector. Therefore, it is necessary to join efforts to promote positive impacts on various social problems that urgently need to be solved collectively, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, and for the common good.

The results presented are consistent with the training program developed with participating journalists from different regions of Peru. Future studies could include a larger sample size to make population inferences. Due to the nature of this study, only the sample of the population that participated in this training program is considered. In addition, similar research can be

conducted in other Latin American countries to identify and compare findings. The most interesting aspect of this program was that all participants received the same training from distinguished and nationally recognized professors and specialists, despite their different geographical locations, micro-specializations, the size of the companies they work for, and social status, among other factors. This type of training program is very costly for traditional communication and media companies to develop on their own. Therefore, from both a logistical and financial standpoint, this free program for all participants proved to be highly interesting and efficient for journalists. Future studies could consider variations of the above characteristics and establish relationships between the variables studied.

6. Acknowledgements

This article has been translated into English by Katia Paola Donayre Salazar to whom we are grateful for her work.

7. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and Surname
Conception and design of the work	Julianna Paola Ramírez-Lozano and Kelly Rojas-Valdez
Methodology	Julianna Paola Ramírez-Lozano and Kelly Rojas-Valdez
Data collection and analysis	Julianna Paola Ramírez-Lozano and Kelly Rojas-Valdez
Discussion and conclusions	Julianna Paola Ramírez-Lozano and Kelly Rojas-Valdez
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Julianna Paola Ramírez-Lozano and Kelly Rojas-Valdez

8. Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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10. Annexes

Table A1. Program Structure

Module	Topic	Description of the topic or activity	Duration
Presentation of the network, introduction and sustainable development (OCT-23-21)	Presentation of the network	Presentation of the network and the program.	20 minutes
	Sustainable development	The meaning and importance of sustainable development.	15 minutes
	Journalism as a promoter of sustainable development in Peru	The role of journalists plays as watchdogs and influencers.	15 minutes
	Group activity	Answer the following questions: What sustainability challenges do I face? What do I expect from this network?	45 minutes
Standardization of concepts (NOV-06-21)	What should journalists know about sustainability?	General concepts of sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals and the role of journalists in relation to these issues.	25 minutes
	What should journalists know about the economics of sustainability?	Relevant economic issues, how sustainability affects business and the new role of entrepreneurs.	30 minutes
	What should journalists know about the environmental side of sustainability?	Relevant environmental issues, the world's major environmental concerns, and how journalists can contribute through their work.	30 minutes
	What should journalists know about the economics of sustainability?	Relevant social issues, the world's major social concerns, and how journalists can contribute through their work.	30 minutes
	Group activity	Answer the following questions: How important are these issues in my context? What are the challenges in making these issues a priority for publishers? What can we do to further influence a sustainability agenda?	45 minutes

Progress in Peru (NOV-13-21)	National context of responsible investments	How is sustainability gaining importance in the Peruvian stock market and investment world?	25 minutes
	National circular economy context	Explain the concept of circular economy, the national technical standard, and how to contribute.	30 minutes
	National context of businesses and human rights	What are human rights and how can companies contribute to the national plan?	30 minutes
	National legislative context: BIC Law	Political and legal aspects, highlighting the Collective Benefit and Interest Law (BIC) and its importance as a historical milestone.	30 minutes
	Group activity	Create two research proposals related to the topics presented and indicate the arguments you could present to your editor for approval.	45 minutes
Sustainability tools for journalists (NOV-20-21)	Effective communication	Practical guide to building news through storytelling.	25 minutes
	Sustainability reports	Sustainability reports as primary sources of information (Global Compact, SDG Corporate Tracker, Global Reporting Initiative-GRI, Superintendence of the Securities Market-SMV)	30 minutes
	Relevant publications	Presentation of a list of publications that can be used as a reference, various reliable sources.	30 minutes
	Indices and rankings	Indices and rankings from different sources that serve as a benchmark of outstanding performance in sustainability issues.	30 minutes
	Group activity	Answer the following questions: What elements of the news article could you use as part of the story or narrative? Who could or should be the main character in the story to humanize it? Why? What sources would you use? Why? Would you use personal interviews?	45 minutes

Source: author's own creation based on the website of Responsible Journalism Network.

For more information about the program, please visit the following link: <https://redperiodismoresponsable.pe/red-de-periodismo-responsable/>

Table A2. Contest Categories

Category	Description	Sponsor
Sustainable Development Goals	The media has a fundamental role to play, as it can help set the public agenda on the challenges of achieving the SDGs by 2030, hold the state to its international commitments, and translate the technical language of the SDGs into a more accessible language for citizens.	United Nations Perú Sostenible (Sustainable Peru)
Corporate Transparency	Companies have adopted a position of transparency, and the publication of sustainability reports is an increasingly common means of demonstrating their actions, whether proactively or under pressure from stakeholders. Journalists are expected to act as watchdogs, analyzing, validating, digesting and comparing the information in these reports. They can share success stories that inspire others, identify key industry challenges, create rankings or ratings, and more.	Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)
Financial Inclusion and Economic Development	This category aims to promote financial inclusion, support formal entrepreneurship, and increase access to banking services for more Peruvians. Journalists are expected to highlight these initiatives, showcase ongoing efforts, and raise awareness among small entrepreneurs and individuals about the opportunities available through the digitalization of financial services.	Interbank
Circular Economy	The circular economy is becoming increasingly important in companies' sustainability strategies, with a growing shift from traditional business models to modern circular approaches. Journalists are expected to analyze the national context and the factors—such as legislation, access to financing, or lack of information—that either facilitate or hinder the implementation of new circular business models, as well as the achievement of industrial symbiosis that creates closed-loop supply chains. They are also expected to highlight successful models and high-impact national initiatives.	Enel
Reduction of Inequalities	Reducing inequalities caused by various factors leads to a range of activities, initiatives, and programs developed by companies for the benefit of both employees and clients. These include inclusive hiring processes for people with disabilities, employee health insurance, and efforts toward social inclusion, as well as considerations of race and ethnicity.	Entel

Source: author's own creation based on the website of Responsible Journalism Network. <https://redperiodismoresponsable.pe/red-de-periodismo-responsable/>