


The presence of regional and local aspects about disinformation in scientific production in Spain and Portugal: a review of the state of the art

Presencia de los aspectos regionales y locales sobre desinformación en la producción científica en España y Portugal: revisión del estado de la cuestión



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Abstract:

In an era characterized by the rapid spread of information across digital platforms, understanding the nuances of disinformation has become increasingly critical. Since disinformation is a global problem but has substantially different manifestations at regional and local scales, in this article, we aim to explore the extent to which academic research on this issue accurately reflects the contextual realities of the phenomenon. Through a bibliometric analysis of performance and an exhaustive literature review of scientific articles published in Portugal and Spain between January 1, 2019 - April 30, 2025, and indexed in Web of Science and Scopus (n=187), we try to understand how academic research has addressed this phenomenon and what space has been given to disinformation's regional and local dimensions. Therefore, in this work, we aim to identify gaps in current research that overlook community-specific factors influencing the dissemination and reception of disinformation, analyzing whether disinformation processes have been studied in Spain and Portugal from regional and local perspectives. Our findings will highlight the need for more localized approaches in academic research, ensuring that studies contribute to the theoretical understanding of disinformation as a global phenomenon with practical interventions in combating it at regional and local levels. Moreover, this proposal advocates for a more comprehensive understanding of disinformation in academic research in its different dimensions and geographies.

Keywords:

Disinformation; regional; local; Spain; Portugal; scientific articles; Web of Science.

1. Introduction

In the digital age, where information flows freely and rapidly across many platforms, disinformation has become a pressing concern affecting societies globally (Jerónimo et al., 2023; Correia et al., 2022; Cea & Palomo, 2021). The impact of disinformation extends beyond mere misinformation, it can shape public perceptions, influence political landscapes, and erode trust in institutions (Warin, 2024; Tumber & Waisbord, 2021; Bennett & Livingston, 2018). However, it is crucial to recognize that disinformation is not a uniform phenomenon, as it varies significantly in its forms and effects depending on regional and local contexts (Torre & Jerónimo, 2023; Alcaide-Pulido, 2023; Torre et al., 2023; Miranda et al., 2023; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). This variation underscores the importance of dissecting the complexities of disinformation better to understand its implications in specific local and regional environments, which are still insufficiently studied (Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022; García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2021, 2022).

Resumen:

En una era caracterizada por la rápida difusión de la información a través de plataformas digitales, comprender los matices de la desinformación se ha vuelto cada vez más crucial. A pesar de que la desinformación es un problema global, sus manifestaciones varían considerablemente a nivel regional y local. Por ello, en este artículo nos proponemos analizar en qué medida la investigación académica sobre esta problemática refleja con precisión las realidades contextuales del fenómeno. A través de un análisis bibliométrico de rendimiento y una revisión exhaustiva de la literatura científica publicada en Portugal y España entre el 1 de enero de 2019 y el 30 de abril de 2025, indexada en Web of Science y Scopus (n=187), buscamos entender cómo la investigación académica ha abordado este fenómeno y qué atención se ha dedicado a sus dimensiones regionales y locales. Por lo tanto, en este trabajo, nuestro objetivo es identificar las lagunas en la investigación actual, especialmente aquellas que omiten factores específicos de cada comunidad y que influyen en la difusión y recepción de la desinformación. Analizaremos si los procesos relacionados se han estudiado desde perspectivas locales y regionales en España y Portugal. Los resultados evidenciarán la necesidad de enfoques más localizados en la investigación académica, garantizando que los estudios no solo contribuyan a la comprensión teórica de la desinformación como fenómeno global, sino que también ofrezcan intervenciones prácticas para combatirla a nivel regional y local. Además, esta propuesta aboga por una comprensión más integral de la desinformación en sus diversas dimensiones y geografías dentro de una vertiente académica.

Palabras claves:

Desinformación; regional; local; España; Portugal; artículos científicos; Web of Science.

It is important to highlight that when we discuss local and regional disinformation, we're addressing the critical issue of false or misleading information specifically targeted at distinct geographic areas or communities (Fernández-Barrero et al., 2024; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). This can manifest in various harmful ways, including hoaxes and rumors about a wide range of issues that affect the lives of communities. Especially in moments of crisis misinformation can spread like wildfire, exacerbating community stress and confusion (Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). Additionally, this kind of disinformation is skilled at exploiting existing social tensions, regional identities, and cultural beliefs, deepening divides within the community. Local disinformation frequently leverages trusted local news sources, community social media platforms, and personal connections, making it far more dangerous (Fernández-Barrero et al., 2024; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). The impact is profound and immediate, local disinformation can undermine trust in essential institutions, incite community conflict, and radically alter behaviors more quickly than broader national narratives ever could.

Therefore, in this article, we explore the academic discourse surrounding disinformation, mainly through the lens of scientific studies published in Portugal and Spain in recent years (2019-2025), as indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. Our analysis will highlight how effectively these articles capture the contextual realities of disinformation as it exists within these Iberian nations. Specifically, we will examine how research has acknowledged and incorporated regional and local dimensions of disinformation, including cultural, social, and political factors that may influence how disinformation is disseminated and received within different communities.

Considering these objectives, we defined the following research questions to guide us during the study: “How do academic publications in Portugal and Spain, indexed in WoS and Scopus, characterize the phenomenon of disinformation, and what frameworks do they employ to analyze it?” (RQ1); “To what extent do existing academic studies indexed in these databases address the regional and local dimensions of disinformation in Portugal and Spain?” (RQ2); and “What methodologies have been predominantly used in examining disinformation in the academic articles analyzed, and how do these methodologies shape findings?” (RQ3).

The relevance of this proposal is supported by research already carried out, namely the different bibliometric studies that indicate that a large part of the publications on disinformation continue to present perspectives that are too focused on the same contexts and realities because they are essentially produced by authors and/or universities in the United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; Tătaru et al., 2024; Durr-Missau, 2024; Cea & Palomo, 2021). Although Spain also stands out as one of the countries that has contributed the most to research on disinformation, studies carried out on publication in this country warn of the need to study disinformation in the local context (Alcaide-Pulido, 2023; García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2021, 2022).

Therefore, through this investigation, we aim to identify notable gaps in the existing body of research. By bringing these gaps to light, we will argue for adopting more localized research methodologies that not only enhance the theoretical frameworks for understanding disinformation as a global issue but also resonate with real-world, mainly local and regional applications. Our findings will ultimately advocate for a more focused approach to studying disinformation, encompassing its various dimensions and geographies. Academic investigations into disinformation must be not only theoretically robust but also practically relevant, providing insights that can inform targeted interventions and strategies to combat this pervasive challenge

at both regional and local levels. Through this comprehensive understanding, researchers and practitioners can better equip communities to navigate the complexities of disinformation in an increasingly interconnected world.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section briefly overviews the growth of disinformation studies and explains the concepts and definitions related to information disorder. In the second section, we describe the methodology used for the study, precisely the meta-investigation approach. The following section presents the results of our analysis. Finally, we conclude by discussing the limitations of the research and suggesting directions for future studies.

2. State of the art

In recent years, the idea of disinformation, especially in the form of fake news, has sparked numerous scientific articles across various countries and contexts, highlighting its status as a critical issue in today's society. According to Salaverría and Cardoso (2023) "in parallel with the surge of disinformation, academic interest in this phenomenon has grown in recent years. Research groups, observatories, and international academic networks are studying this phenomenon" (p. 2). The authors further consider that "the projects, methodologies, and contexts by which the public dissemination of falsehoods is studied have multiplied, to the point where they now compose a diverse and especially fruitful corpus of research" (Salaverría & Cardoso, 2023, p. 2).

In this context of multiplication of the corpus of publications on disinformation, bibliometric studies have emerged as an important contribution to "understand the evolution and dimension of disinformation", as well as the "historical and social context that explains why it has emerged and intensified in recent times, especially in relation to technological development and changes in media consumption, as well as its multidisciplinary nature through knowledge of the areas in which this phenomenon is addressed" (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024, p. 2). Therefore, and according to some bibliometric studies, in recent decades, but especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation and misinformation become one of the most researched topics in the fields of social sciences and communication (Sandu et al., 2024; Durr-Missau, 2024; Tătaru et al., 2024; Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; KaabOmeir et al., 2024; Pandey & Ghosh, 2023; Salvador-Mata et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023; Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023; García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2021, 2022; Bran et al., 2021). Nevertheless, in the context of growing studies on disinformation, what has been the focus of investigations? What topics have been privileged? What objects of study have been analyzed?

Several of the bibliometric studies carried out effectively present data on research into disinformation, highlighting "the importance of disinformation as an object of study" (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024, p. 17) and creating, according to the authors, "a foundation for researchers and governments to begin to take into account the dangers of disinformation, promoting methods that mitigate the spread of false information" (Tătaru et al., 2024, p. 34). However, the truth is that many of these studies present multiple of the limitations of bibliometric studies, mainly because, to systematize and quantify the results, they do not allow, in numerous cases, a practical understanding of the characteristics of studies on disinformation.

In this context, we highlight the work of Salaverría and Cardoso (2023), which, although not a bibliometric study, presents important contributions to studies on disinformation since the authors seek to categorize the different studies already carried out on this topic. The authors identify several key research avenues:

1. “Typological Studies”: These focus on classifying and defining disinformative content, making a distinction between unintentional errors (misinformation) and intentional falsehoods (disinformation).
2. “Fact-Checking Studies”: This category examines the role of fact-checking organizations, evaluating their professional functions, ethical standards, and organizational structures.
3. “Disinformation on Digital Platforms”: Researchers analyze the online spread of disinformation, investigating practices such as impostor profiles, bots, and trolls.
4. “Media Literacy Studies” focuses on teaching critical thinking and fact-checking skills, especially to youth.

Through this typology, the authors provide a comprehensive overview of the diverse strands of research that seek to understand and combat disinformation. Moreover, in addition to exploring current lines of research, the authors also point to emerging areas that require greater attention. Therefore, according to Salaverría and Cardoso (2023), “the continuous transformation of the channels of dissemination, production technologies, and derived effects of false content demands that new lines of study are opened” (p. 3). Among the lines of research that “have not yet been sufficiently explored so far” and that could “pave the way to a new era of disinformation studies”, the authors highlight the following:

1. “Studies on disinformation narratives”, which try to understand the logic behind the rise of some fake news in specific contexts. In these studies, the main goal is to “focus more on general and systemic aspects” (Salaverría & Cardoso, 2023, p. 3).
2. “Studies on international manipulation and interference”, with investigations focusing on the incidence of international disinformation agents who seek to destabilize countries and interfere in the electoral processes. The authors highlight that “research on the phenomena of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) is often close to strategic intelligence and cybersecurity, transcending the capabilities and competencies of ordinary academic researchers” (Salaverría & Cardoso, 2023, p. 4).
3. “Studies on AI-generated disinformation” focused on analyzing the impact of generative artificial intelligence technologies, which allow the creation and manipulation of content easily.
4. “Cross-platform disinformation studies”, dedicated to investigating the spread of disinformation in areas other than social media. According to the authors, “fact-checking organizations dedicate much of their work to verifying public discourse but, in contrast, there is little academic research dedicated to analyzing the creation and strategic dissemination of disinformation discourses from political parties and leaders (e.g. Llorca et al., 2021)” (Salaverría & Cardoso, 2023, p. 4).
5. “Thematic studies on disinformation”, which expand research beyond politics, addressing “topics such as the environment and the global climate crisis, immigration, or the reduction of social inequalities” (Salaverría & Cardoso, 2023, p. 4).
6. “Multidisciplinary disinformation studies” focused on promoting collaboration between different areas of knowledge, such as linguistics, AI, psychology and neuroscience. The authors highlight that “studies with a multidisciplinary approach are scarce” and that “some of the most promising and fruitful lines of work in recent years come from this knowledge sharing”, namely “the combination of linguistics and artificial intelligence technologies” (Salaverría & Cardoso, 2023, p. 5).
7. “Studies on media literacy for the elderly” focused on analyzing the information consumption habits of older people and on ways to reinforce their protection against false messages (e.g. Sádaba et al., 2023; Moore & Hancock, 2022; Rasi et al., 2020).

Considering all the new or emerging lines of research presented by the authors, it is interesting that we do not find, at least apparently, any reference to studies on disinformation at a local or regional level. The issue is even more relevant if we consider that several authors consider this to be a flaw that exists in the literature (Torre & Jerónimo, 2023; Alcaide-Pulido, 2023; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022; García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2022, 2021). The truth is that local disinformation is an emerging concern that threatens community information ecosystems and democratic processes. While local media traditionally are closer to communities and, because of that, enjoy higher credibility regarding some subjects, the lack of resources in newsrooms often affects the work they can do, namely in terms of verification of information (Torre et al., 2023; Miranda et al., 2023; Morais et al., 2020). Therefore, the decline of local media, accelerated by the pandemic and digital transformation, has left communities vulnerable to misinformation spread through social media (Torre & Jerónimo, 2023; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). Researchers suggest that addressing local disinformation requires training journalists, developing fact-checking strategies, and fostering collaboration between journalists and active community members (Fernández-Barrero et al., 2024; Torre & Jerónimo, 2023; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). The local public sphere may offer potential solutions to this growing problem, which has been understudied in disinformation research.

Therefore, what motivated us to carry out this work has to do with the fact that we understand that academia also has responsibilities in terms of identifying strategies to fight against disinformation that does not focus solely on the national or supranational level, that does not just follow the latest technological trends or specific thematic agendas. That is why we sought to understand to what extent existing academic studies address disinformation's regional and local dimensions in Portugal and Spain. The reason why we chose these two countries was not random, but on the contrary, it was also supported by studies already published, which indicate that Spain is one of the countries, after the Anglo-Saxons, with the most research in the area of disinformation (Tătaru et al., 2024; Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024), but also because in these two countries we find research projects focused on the study of disinformation at a local level, such as "MediaTrust.Lab: Regional Media Laboratory for Trust and Civic Literacy", developed at LabCom: Laboratory of Communication, a research unit of the Faculty of Arts and Letters (FAL) of the University of Beira Interior (UBI) in partnership with the University of Coimbra, and "Fakelocal: Map of Disinformation in Communities Autonomous and Local Entities of Spain and its Digital Ecosystem", developed by the Universities of Santiago de Compostela and Vigo.

In the case of the first, as "a pioneering study on disinformation in local contexts in Portugal", the objective is to "identify and analyze strategies and practices for verifying information by regional media journalists and the potential collaboration of the public local communication processes in the process" (Universidade da Beira Interior, 2021), as explained by the project manager and LabCom researcher, Pedro Jerónimo. In the case of the second, the objective is to "see what impact disinformation has at a regional and local level", explains coordinator Xosé Rúas, highlighting that "disinformation crises not only come from the global to the local level" but also can happen in the opposite direction, this being a reality that has been little studied (University of Santiago de Compostela, 2023).

In addition to the number of publications and projects developed in each country on disinformation, it is also worth noting that several authors (Gelado-Marcos et al., 2025; Baldi & Ballesteros-Aguayo, 2024; Jerónimo & Sánchez Esparza, 2023) have, in recent years, adopted an Iberian approach to the study of disinformation, namely through an analysis of fact-checking as a strategy to combat disinformation. This comparative approach should also be understood in the wake of the work of

the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and in particular of one of the first hubs created within it, with the aim of addressing content verification in the Iberian context, the Iberian Digital Media Observatory (IBERIFIER). This Observatory, which brings together the countries of the Iberian Peninsula, has as its main mission “to analyze the Iberian digital media ecosystem and tackle the problem of disinformation” (IBERIFIER, n/d).

The question we pose is then to understand whether only these institutions and projects consider that local and regional disinformation can be an object of study or whether, on the contrary, we find studies focused on examining the misinformation from a local and regional point of view in the articles already published in recent years.

At this point it is also important to highlight that in this investigation we consider for analysis purposes the period that begins in 2019 and goes until 2025, since if it is true that the manipulation of information is not a new phenomenon, what we are witnessing in the 21st century is to “the weaponization of information on an unprecedented scale” (Ireton & Posetti, 2018, p. 15). On the other hand, research shows that it was mainly from the second half of 2016 that people started to search for the term “fake news” (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018), this also being the year that marks a paradigm shift, in the sense that it became clear that “the online information infrastructure was particularly permeable to disinformation and misinformation” (Mantzaris, 2018, p. 82).

According to some studies, there have been publications on information disorder since at least 1980 (Tătaru et al., 2024). However, the authors emphasize that for several years, “the publication rate in the field of disinformation was minimal” (Tătaru et al., 2024, p. 7). It is mainly from 2014 onwards that we see a change in the trend of publishing articles on disinformation (Tătaru et al., 2024; Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023), which would intensify in the following years, albeit in different ways depending on the geographical context. From 2016 onwards, for example, following the Brexit referendum, as well as the US elections that led to Donald Trump becoming US President, we see a new growth in scientific production on disinformation and so-called “fake news” (Tătaru et al., 2024; Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023; Cea & Palomo, 2021). However, if we look at other realities, such as the Portuguese and Spanish ones, which we seek to study in this article, we notice, in line with the trend already identified in other studies (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2021, 2022), that it is mainly from 2018 onwards that there is an increase in publications on disinformation, “which is consolidated in the period 2020–2023, in which almost 80% of the documents are concentrated” (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024, p. 4). According to García-Marín and Salvat-Martinrey (2022), “the great quantitative leap took place in 2019, when works tripled compared to the previous year” (p. 32).

This increase in publications is explained mainly by the Covid-19 pandemic, “when misinformation and disinformation not only threaten societal coercion but people’s lives” (Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023, p. 76), which led the World Health Organization itself to mention that we were living in an infodemic era. It remains to be seen whether there are other events that, in the context of these countries, contributed to the increase in publications, as seems to be the case in Spain, with the increase in studies on disinformation related to the elections (e.g. Rando-Cueto et al., 2025; Lava-Santos et al., 2023; Tirado-García, 2023; Rivas-de-Roca et al., 2022; Rodríguez-Fernández, 2020; Paniagua Rojano et al., 2020) and on the independence of Catalonia (e.g. Pérez-Curiel et al., 2022; Llorca-Asensi et al., 2021; Aparici et al., 2019; Coromina & Padilla, 2018;) or more recently with

the studies carried out by researchers from both countries on disinformation about the War in Ukraine (e.g. Morais et al., 2025; Ballesteros-Aguayo et al., 2024; Sánchez del Vas & Tuñón Navarro, 2024; Baptista et al., 2023; Magallón-Rosa et al., 2023).

3. Methods

As we mentioned earlier, much attention has been paid to the phenomenon of information disorder (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; Tătaru et al., 2024; Durr-Missau, 2024; Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022; García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2022; Pérez-Curiel, & Rivas-de-Roca, 2022; Bran et al., 2021; Cea & Palomo, 2021), mainly to disinformation and fake news. Much of this attention is revealed in the number of articles published. Bibliometric studies also have sought to account for this growth. However, in most of these studies, the focus has been on studying disinformation from a macro perspective; that is, these studies have failed to identify the local and regional dimensions of disinformation research (Torre & Jerónimo, 2023; Alcaide-Pulido, 2023; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022; García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2022, 2021). This approach is precisely the gap that we seek to fill with this article, which, as meta-research, seeks not only to identify the focus and amount of work that has been produced on disinformation in Portugal and Spain in the last years (January 1, 2019 - April 30, 2025) but, above all, understand whether disinformation has also been studied in these articles through regional and local perspectives.

The choice of Portugal and Spain has already been explained previously, but it is important to highlight that disinformation is a significant concern in Portugal and Spain, with Governments taking measures to combat it and promote media literacy (Moreno-Castro et al., 2023). On the other hand, despite the differences between the countries, their media systems are interconnected through several shared features. Both can be framed within the concept of “polarized pluralism” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), where media ecosystems are influenced by a combination of competitive market forces and significant political factors. This is especially evident in the strategic use of media by political actors (Gelado-Marcos et al., 2025). Thus, this is yet another reason, in addition to those previously indicated, such as the number of publications, research projects and cooperation networks regarding disinformation (Portugal and Spain are members of the EDMO network and together they form IBERIFIER, the Digital Media Research and Fact-Checking Hub), to justify the selection of the two countries for this study. Based on these objectives, we developed three main questions that we believe have not yet been answered by the work already carried out:

RQ1: How do academic publications in Portugal and Spain, indexed in WoS and Scopus characterize the phenomenon of disinformation, and what frameworks do they employ to analyze it?

RQ2: To what extent do existing academic studies indexed in these databases address the regional and local dimensions of disinformation in Portugal and Spain?

RQ3: What methodologies have been predominantly used in examining disinformation in the academic articles analyzed, and how do these methodologies shape findings?

To achieve these goals and answer these research questions, we searched for articles about disinformation published in journals indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus. To identify the articles, we used the following search algorithms:

Web of Science

- [Topic="disinformation" AND "fake news" AND "Portugal"] AND [Document Type="Article"] AND [Web of Science Index="SSCI" OR "ESCI"]=18 articles.
- [Topic="misinformation" AND "fake news" AND "Portugal"] AND [Document Type="Article"] AND [Web of Science Index="SSCI" OR "ESCI"]=12 articles.
- [Topic="disinformation" AND "fake news" AND "Spain"] AND [Document Type ="Article"] AND [Web of Science Index="SSCI" OR "ESCI"]=115 articles.
- [Topic="misinformation" AND "fake news" AND "Spain"] AND [Document Type ="Article"] AND [Web of Science Index="SSCI" OR "ESCI"]=72 articles.

Scopus

- [TITLE-ABS-KEY (disinformation) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (fake AND news) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Portugal)] AND [LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "article")]=20 articles.
- [TITLE-ABS-KEY (misinformation) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (fake AND news) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Portugal)] AND [LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "article")]=11 articles.
- [TITLE-ABS-KEY (disinformation) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (fake AND news) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Spain)] AND [LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "article")]=102 articles.
- [TITLE-ABS-KEY (misinformation) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (fake AND news) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Spain)] AND [LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "article")]=53 articles.

The data retrieval carried out on April 30, 2025, allowed the identification of 403 articles, distributed as follows: WoS (Portugal: n=30; Spain: n=187) and Scopus (Portugal: n=31; Spain: n=155).

It is important to highlight that the search terms had to be in the article's title, abstract, or keywords, since authors find that "Abstract, the Title, and the Keywords were enough to perform a substantially decent evaluation of a manuscript" (Chamorro-Padial & Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2023, p. 23075). On the other hand, we should also point out that in addition to the term disinformation, we also considered the terms' misinformation and mal-information, as they integrate "the spectrum of information disorder" (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2018, p. 43). On the other hand, he also considers the term fake news in our research, since, although "fake news is an oxymoron that undermines the credibility of information that does indeed meet the threshold of verifiability and public interest - i.e. real news" (Berger, 2018, p. 7), the truth is that several studies have shown that this continues to be one of the most used terms in academic research, namely, in titles, abstracts and keywords (Tătaru et al., 2024; Bran et al., 2021).

From the total number of articles identified in the search, we performed a cleaning process to eliminate repeated articles in each of the databases and between databases, since we identified a large number of articles indexed in both WoS and Scopus. Thus, after eliminating these articles, the final sample consists of 187 articles.

Table 1. Distribution of articles in the sample by country and database

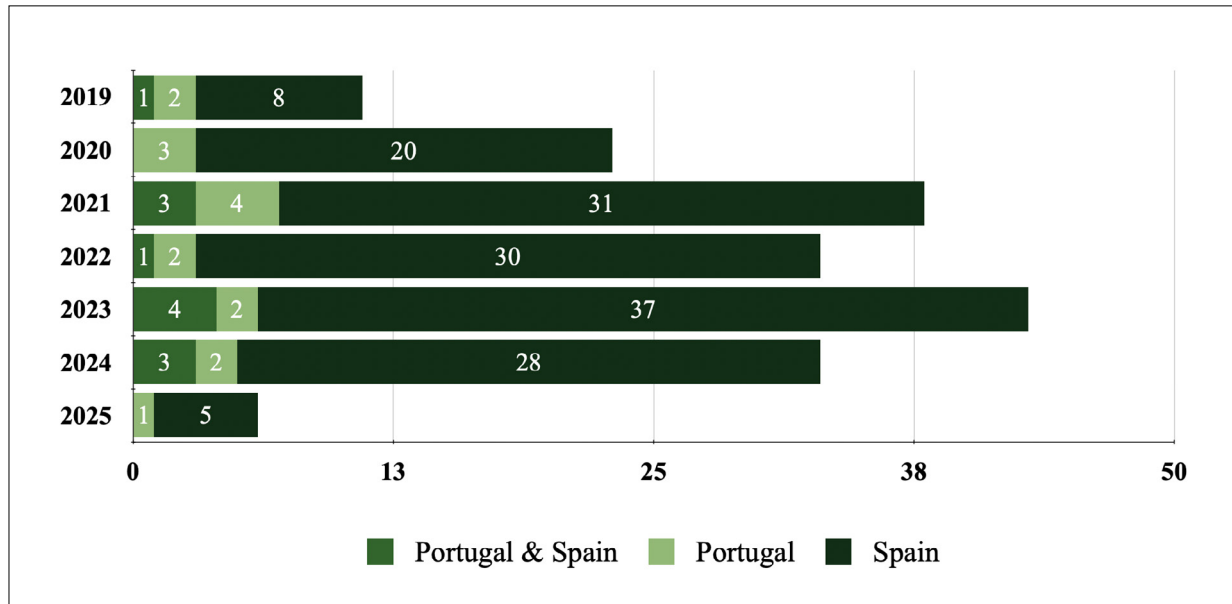
	Spain	Portugal	Portugal & Spain
Only Scopus	25	5	1
Only WoS	44	2	3
Scopus and Wos	90	9	8
Total	159	16	12

Source: authors' own elaboration

Based on the data found in the research, and according to previous similar studies (e.g., Morais et al., 2025), we first carried out a preliminary performance analysis to identify the year of publication, journal name, institutional affiliation and country of origin. In a second step, and through an in-depth literature review, we seek to understand, through the analysis of the research objectives and questions, as well as the methodologies, what the geographical focus of the articles is, that is, whether we are faced with articles that analyze the phenomenon of disinformation from a national, regional or local point of view. At this point, as we have had the opportunity to do previously, it is important to highlight our understanding of disinformation with a local or regional focus. Local and regional disinformation differs from national disinformation because it focuses on specific communities, making its impact more immediate and relevant. It often spreads through trusted local news sources and community networks, making it more dangerous (Fernández-Barrero et al., 2024; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2023; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022). Local and regional disinformation can quickly damage trust in important institutions, spark conflicts, and change behaviors faster than national messages can.

4. Results

We begin presenting the results with the distribution of the number of articles in the sample by year and country.

Figure 1. Distribution of number of articles by country and year

Source: authors' own elaboration using WOS and Scopus data

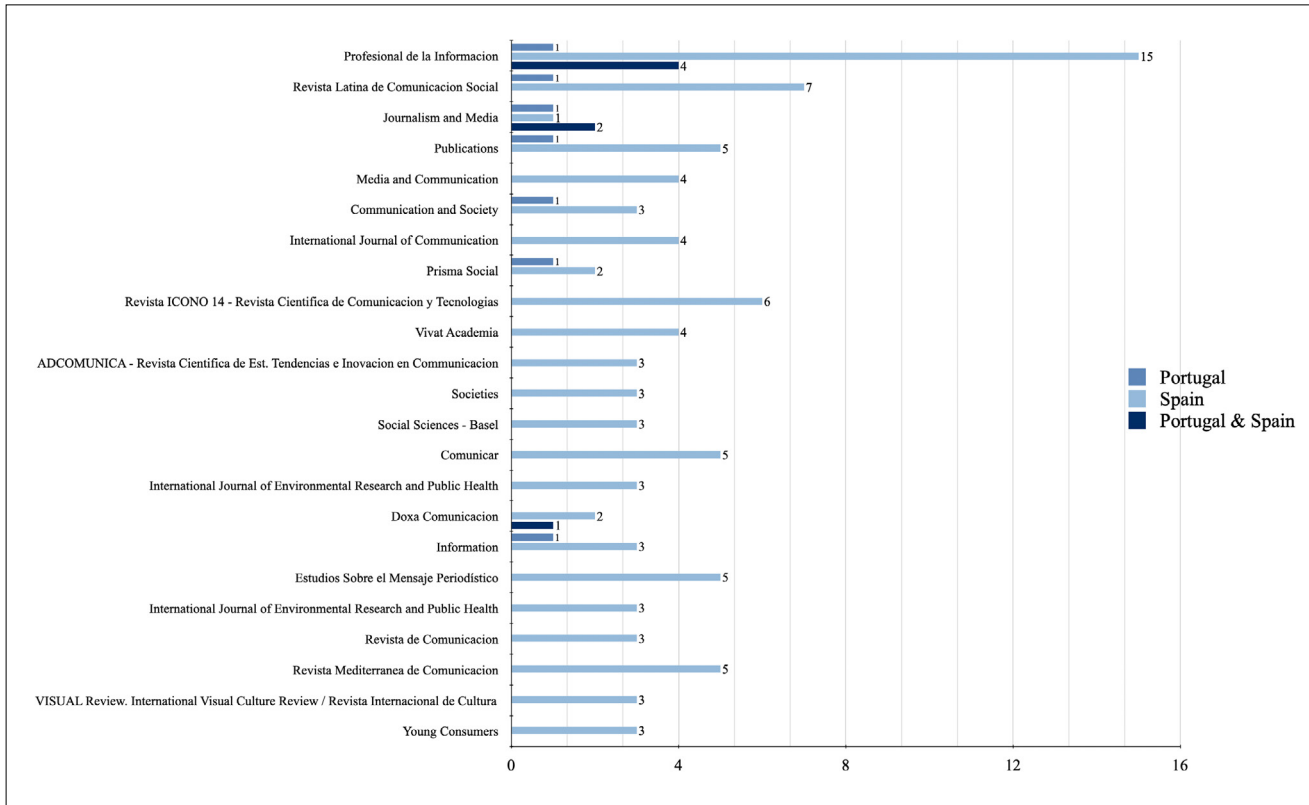
The data collected allows us to see that 2023 is the year with the highest number of published works, mainly due to production in Spain (Figure 1), and it is also the year in which we find the most articles indexed in the two databases and that appear in searches in both countries. It is also important to remember that the data was collected on April 30, 2025, so it is not yet possible to predict whether this will be a year with many publications about disinformation in the Iberian context.

The data also allows us to see that considering the terms of the research, Spain stands out as being associated with a more significant number of publications, which may be the result of the difference in terms of the size of the academic and scientific systems between the two countries but may also indicate distinct research priorities. In any case, an analysis of the authors of the works, their institutional affiliation, and the journals in which they were published will deepen this analysis and establish an effective comparison between the two countries. On the other hand, the results are in line with the research by García-Marín and Salvat-Martínrey (2022), where the authors highlight that “in the Spanish context, most of the research has been carried out since 2018, when they came the first specific monographs on this topic were published in the magazines *Profesional de la Información* and *Hipertext.net*.” (p. 28). They also add that since then, “a total of 14 journals have called for special issues related to this issue. In 2021 alone, 7 monographs were launched”, which helps to explain the peak recorded that year.

After determining the distribution of the sample's scientific production by year and country, we examined the research areas with which the articles appear associated. The data leaves no doubt that it is in the area of Communication that, within the

scope of the research carried out, we found the most significant number of articles on disinformation. If Communication is the predominant area, we find Information Science and Library Science, Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary, Computer Science and Sociology among the areas that also stand out. In this context, it is important to highlight that Computer Science has been one of the areas that has grown the most in publications on disinformation, which will undoubtedly not be unrelated to the explosion and democratization of AI. Nevertheless, areas such as Information Science, Sociology, and although with a smaller number of articles, the areas of Government and Law, Education and Educational Research, Environmental Sciences and Ecology, also deserve to be highlighted. However, it is important to emphasize that as already identified in other investigations (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; Tătaru et al., 2024), studies on disinformation have been relevant, especially in recent years, and mainly due to the influence of the pandemic, each increasingly the multidisciplinary approach. It is also in this sense that the collected data point, not only because the classification of the areas itself already refers to multi-disciplinarity and inter-disciplinarity, but above all because several articles are classified in different areas, which refers to an intersection of knowledge and areas of research. Among the main intersections, we find articles classified in the convergence between the areas of Communication and Information Science, Communication and Education Research, and Communication and Government and Law. The data demonstrate, similar to what has been concluded in other studies, “that disinformation is a cross-cutting problem which affects all areas of knowledge” (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024, p. 4).

Regarding the preferred language for publication, we found that 63% of articles use English (n=118), with only 35% being written in Spanish (n=65). The data also allow us to understand that in the Portuguese sample, articles written in English stand out (n=9), followed by those written in Portuguese (n=4) and finally those written in Spanish (n=3), which may result from research work carried out jointly within the scope of collaboration networks. In the case of Spanish, there is also a preference for English as the language for publication (n=100), followed by Spanish (n=59). In the case of articles that appeared in both samples, the emphasis in terms of language of publication once again goes to English (n=8), with a reduced number of articles (n=3) written in Spanish. The data are in line with other work already carried out, which highlights that “this international vocation and the intention to achieve the widest dissemination of published results is evident in the use of English as the main language of publication” (Navarro-Sierra et al. 2024, p. 4). On the other hand, it is important to highlight that many newspapers now publish articles in Portuguese and English or Spanish and English. This tendency is particularly evident in the works of the Spanish sample, where in the research itself, the titles always appear in both languages.

Figure 2. Distribution of the number of articles by country and journal

Source: authors' own elaboration using WOS data.

*Only journals with at least three articles

The choice of language for publication appears in most cases associated with the journal chosen to publicize the work. In this sense, it is important to look at the journals where the works on disinformation that integrate the sample are published. The data in Figure 2 show that authors choose a wide variety of magazines to publish their work on disinformation. Although the vast majority of journals have only one or two works on disinformation, the journals *Profesional de la Información*, *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, *Revista ICONO 14*, *Publications*, *Comunicar*, *Estudios Sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, and *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación* stand out as those where the most works on disinformation have been published, considering our sample. These data are once again in line with other studies already carried out (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2022), where it was also highlighted that the reason for the preference for publication in English was also due to a lot to these magazines. In this context, it is interesting to note that although the number of Spanish journals is greater

than the others, which can be explained by the fact that many allow the publication of articles also in Portuguese, the language that authors prefer, even in Spanish journals, it ends up being almost always English.

Another aspect that is important to highlight from the sample analysis is related to the fact that, as is the case with the research areas, publications are identified in journals from the most varied areas, with emphasis, for example, on journals in the area of public health, which may also be related to the peak of scientific production related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this increasingly diversified publication reinforces the idea of the complexity of the phenomenon of disinformation and its relevance for different areas and scientific journals.

Regarding the authorship of the works in our sample, we noticed that only a small number (n=26) have a single author, which means that the vast majority (n=161) results from joint work by several authors. Within the scope of these collaborations, works with two authors (n=94) stand out, followed by those with three authors (n=75), four authors (n=26) and five authors or more (n=13). We can also observe that in the case of data from the Portuguese sample, only three works have a single author, showing that the authors prefer joint works, especially with four authors (n=7), two authors (n=4) or three authors (n=2).

In the case of the Spanish sample, we found a more significant number of works carried out individually (n=23), and more collaborations between authors, with emphasis on works with three authors (n=62) and two authors (n=42). These data reveal not only that there is strong collaboration between authors in studies on disinformation but also that the approaches of these articles themselves end up being multidisciplinary, as we have already had the opportunity to see from the intersection between research areas and journals chosen for publication.

The articles present a considerable number of authors, and we also found a distribution of works by authors; in the sample, we did not identify a small group of authors being responsible for the majority of works. In reality, what we noticed is that in the case of the Spanish sample, there are authors who participate in a maximum of two or three articles, with Ramón Salaverria being the exception, as he appears in five articles. In the case of the Portuguese sample, there is also no concentration of works by the same authors, with only João Pedro Baptista standing out as the first author of three articles that make up the sample. The data are once again in line with studies already carried out (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024), which highlight the distribution of articles by several authors, even highlighting that “the top 25 authors on research topics related to disinformation account for only 6% of the registered articles” (p. 5).

Regarding the authors' affiliation of the articles, it was possible to identify a great diversity of universities and institutions in our sample. Most of the universities are Spanish, but it should also be noted the participation of researchers from foreign institutions, reinforcing the relevance of collaborations in articles on disinformation, but above all, demonstrating that research has assumed, in many cases, a comparative dimension between countries, in a global approach from which local and regional nuances may escape, an aspect to which we seek to draw attention in the scope of this work. Among the universities with the most authors and affiliations, the following stand out among the Spanish ones: Rey Juan Carlos University, University of Navarra, Complutense University of Madrid, University Carlos III of Madrid, University of Valencia. In Portugal, the highlight goes to the University of Beira Interior. With these data, we conclude the first part of the presentation of the results, which mainly aims to provide a general overview, from a more bibliometric perspective, concerning the articles published on disinformation in recent years in journals indexed in the Web of Science, and which were part of the sample.

Next, and as we mentioned in the methodological section, we seek to analyze the articles based on their content, that is, we intend to understand the main objects of study and methodologies adopted. In general, we can observe that the articles analyze the dissemination of fake news and misinformation, exploring different aspects such as different forms of dissemination, social and political impacts, combat strategies, including the role of fact-checkers and media literacy, and perceptions of the population and communication professionals about the phenomenon. The various media outlets involved, from social networks to newspapers and digital platforms, are analyzed, as well as demographic and ideological characteristics related to vulnerability to disinformation.

One aspect that deserves to be highlighted in this more general analysis of the articles is related to the number of manuscripts that address misinformation and fake news in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. With very different approaches, ranging from dissemination, impact on public health, citizens' perception, the role of fact-checking, strategies to combat misinformation, to the impact on political and social attitudes, the truth is that this topic arises, as in fact it has already been identified in other studies carried out (Navarro-Sierra et al., 2024; Tătaru et al., 2024; Durr-Missau, 2024; Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023), as a catalyst for studies on disinformation.

Another aspect is related to the importance of fact-checking in the context of studies on disinformation. Several articles address the topic of fact-checking, whether as a tool to combat misinformation or as an object of study in itself. The articles explore different aspects, from the methodologies used by fact-checking organizations to their impact on society and citizen trust. The investigations thus show that fact-checking is a growing field within academic research, with several articles emphasizing that it cannot function as an isolated solution given the complexity of the problem of disinformation, requiring multiple approaches that must include media literacy and strengthening journalism itself.

Among the aspects we highlight, in this general look at the articles on disinformation, the number of comparative studies identified also stands out. Disinformation and fake news analysis is done with significant recourse to comparison. It deserves to be highlighted and seems essential to us because it allows for differences and common patterns between different geographical, social, and media contexts. In this context, in addition to the expected comparison regarding the disinformation situation between Portugal and Spain, we identified the following comparisons: between European and Latin American countries (e.g. Canavilhas & Jorge, 2022; Rodríguez- Virgili, et al., 2021; López-Marcos & Vicente-Fernández, 2021); between European citizens and their perspectives on disinformation (e.g. Rodríguez-Pérez et al., 2024; Nygren et al., 2021); concerning specific disinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. Colmenero-Ruiz et al., 2023; Tarullo & Gamir-Rios, 2022; Sareliska & Jenkins, 2022; Peña Ascacibar et al., 2021); comparisons regarding the impact of disinformation on different platforms such as social networks (Facebook and Twitter), instant messaging services (such as WhatsApp) and traditional media (e.g. Pothitou et al., 2025; Alonso-López et al., 2021); comparisons between the strategies and methodologies of different fact-checking organizations (e.g. Hernández-Rodríguez et al., 2023; López-Marcos & Vicente-Fernández, 2021; Ufarte-Ruiz et al., 2020); comparisons between media (e.g. Renedo-Farpón et al., 2022); and comparisons regarding the impact of misinformation on demographic groups (e.g. Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2024; Colussi et al., 2024).

The number of comparative articles demonstrates the complexity of the disinformation phenomenon and the need for an analysis that considers different contexts. However, despite the diversity of comparative articles and the type of comparison

carried out between continents, countries, platforms, and demographic groups, among other aspects, we cannot fail to emphasize that local and regional dimensions tend to be left out of these comparisons. On the other hand, it is essential to emphasize that although comparisons between countries, for example, already refer to different realities and specific contexts, this is not the understanding we have when we refer to studies on disinformation with a local or regional approach, since in these cases, and despite the comparison, the lens is almost always oriented towards the national level. When we discuss a local or regional focus in disinformation studies, we are highlighting research that critically examines disinformation within specific sub-national areas. This might encompass a city, province, distinct geographical region, or even a network of interrelated smaller communities. This focused approach allows us to uncover the unique dynamics, key players, and profound impacts of disinformation in these defined areas. For example, a study could investigate how misleading information about a local election proliferated through local WhatsApp groups, or how false narratives regarding a regional health crisis influenced communities. In contrast, when we turn our attention to comparisons between countries, we recognize the distinct realities and national contexts each country possesses. However, the level of analysis often remains at the national scale. Such comparisons reveal how disinformation is manifested and confronted within each nation. The emphasis frequently stays on overarching national trends, policies, and effects, rather than probing into the nuanced variations and specific challenges faced at local or regional levels. Consequently, a study comparing disinformation in Portugal and Spain may analyze national media coverage, evaluate responses from national policies, or draw insights from national surveys. It typically does not delve into the differences between cities like Lisbon and Porto or between Madrid and Barcelona, unless it explicitly embraces a local or regional framework within its comparative analysis. Focusing on these localized aspects is essential for truly understanding the intricate landscape of disinformation and its implications on communities.

Finally, in this first analysis of the content of the articles from our sample, we highlight the diversity of methodological approaches adopted to analyze the phenomenon of disinformation, which include quantitative, qualitative and mixed studies, with emphasis on the use of techniques such as analysis of content, surveys and interviews. Content analysis even emerges as the most widely used methodology, being applied to different types of data such as fake news, fact-checking articles, and publications on social networks and/or websites. Many articles also use surveys to collect data on citizens' perceptions and behaviors regarding misinformation. Interviews are also used for this purpose, although less frequently, and are mainly an option for approaching journalists, fact-checkers and representatives of organizations. Some studies that carry out social network analysis to study the dissemination of fake news also stand out, as well as some articles that use bibliometric analysis to examine scientific production on disinformation, identifying trends, most influential authors and collaboration networks; and experimental studies that seek to evaluate the impact of certain media literacy practices.

After this more generic analysis, in this second moment, we sought to understand how many works from our sample study disinformation at a local or regional level. We started this process with a general search in the titles, abstracts and keywords, looking for terms such as: "local"; "regional"; "local media"; regional media"; "proximity". Through this research, we identified only five articles that present, in the title and/or abstract and/or keywords, references to works on disinformation in local or regional contexts (Table 1). We then analyzed each of these works to understand the context in which the search terms were used and whether we are effectively dealing with articles that address misinformation at a local or regional level.

Table 2. List of articles that refer to local or regional in the title, abstract or keywords

Complete references
Almansa-Martínez, A., Fernández-Torres, M.J., & Rodríguez-Fernández, L. (2022). Desinformación en España un año después de la COVID-19. Análisis de las verificaciones de Newtral y Maldita. <i>Revista Latina de Comunicación Social</i> , 80, 183-200. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2022-1538
Cazzamatta, R. (2024). Global misinformation trends: Commonalities and differences in topics, sources of falsehoods, and deception strategies across eight countries. <i>New Media & Society</i> , (online first). https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241268896
Fernández-Barrero, Á., Rivas-de-Roca, R., & Pérez-Curiel, C. (2024). Disinformation and Local Media in the Iberian Context: How to Protect News Credibility. <i>Journalism and Media</i> , 5(1), 65-77. https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia5010005
Mula-Grau, J., & Cambroner-Saiz, B. (2022). Identificación de las fake news que se publican en la edición en papel de un diario provincial en la era de la desinformación digital de Trump y el inicio del COVID. <i>Vivat Academia</i> , 155, 23-38. https://doi.org/10.15178/va.2022.155.e1329
Rodríguez-Ferrándiz, R., Sánchez-Olmos, C., Hidalgo-Marí, T., & Saquete-Boro, E. (2021). Memetics of Deception: Spreading Local Meme Hoaxes during COVID-19 1st Year. <i>Future Internet</i> , 13(6), 152. https://doi.org/10.3390/fi13060152

Source: authors' own elaboration

In the article by Almansa-Martínez et al. (2022), the authors propose to analyze the fake news detected by the two major fact-checking platforms in Spain (Maldito Bulo and Newtral) during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic to determine the proportion of fake news related to COVID-19 versus other topics. Through a content analysis of 255 fact-checks, the authors conclude that the amount of COVID-19 related misinformation in Spain has decreased significantly a year after the start of the pandemic, with only about a quarter of detected fake news being about the pandemic, as most of the misinformation detected was on topics unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on political issues, coups and other social topics. In the case of this article, it is part of the research carried out, mainly due to a reference made in the abstract, where it is indicated that “almost a quarter of the hoaxes have the Spanish Government, regional governments and other institutions as protagonists” (p. 183). Therefore, no authentic approach considers disinformation at a local or regional level.

Regarding Cazzamatta (2024), the author proposes to examine the commonalities and differences in (a) topics, (b) sources of falsehoods, and (c) deception strategies across eight countries in Europe and Latin America. The objective is to investigate how context and national political agendas shape misinformation patterns in these countries. After a content selection process by identifying different fact-checking organizations in each country, the author analyzes a sample of 3154 fact-checks from 2022. Among the main conclusions, the author highlights that Latin American countries experience more fabricated and decontextualized misinformation due to high social media use for news and low reliance on public media. On the other hand, European countries are more impacted by misleading information that involves cherry-picking, exaggeration, and twisting of facts. The article is part of our sample since the abstract mentions that “this study examines global trends in misinformation

and regional nuances in eight countries in Europe and Latin America.” In this case, the understanding of the concept of regional concerns each of the countries but is far from an approach centered on local or regional means or on the misinformation that circulates at that level.

Fernández-Barrero et al. (2024) examine the shaping of verification tasks in local media, focusing on polarized areas. The authors propose to explore whether media professionals have a clear and shared vision of what disinformation implies and understand how disinformation is managed in local media newsrooms by identifying the verification strategies used by local and regional media. To achieve these objectives, the authors carried out a multiple-case study, using in-depth interviews with journalists and managers from four local media outlets in Spain and Portugal and a thematic analysis of information about each media outlet studied. The authors conclude that local journalists recognize misinformation as a significant problem, citing social media and the speed of the digital news cycle as key factors. They further add that local media outlets rely on their established credibility and connection to the local community to combat disinformation rather than using automated fact-checking tools. They indicate differences between Spain and Portugal regarding local media’s collaboration with digital platforms like Facebook and Google. Portuguese outlets are more likely to receive funding and support from these companies. This article effectively focuses on studying disinformation with a place-centered approach.

Mula-Grau and Cambroner-Saiz (2022) developed a study where they asked what type of news the different topics related to fake news generated. In the article, the authors seek, above all, to analyze the treatment the news makes of fake news (report, criticism, manipulation, etc.), as well as the characteristics and treatment the news makes of the persons and/or facts related to fake news. The authors use a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative analyses to analyze 350 complete copies of the *Diario Información* newspaper published between February 3, 2020, and January 21, 2021. Among the main conclusions, they highlight that the local newspaper published around 58 articles related to fake news over nearly a year, averaging about one per week. On the other hand, they emphasize that most of these articles were opinion pieces rather than hard news or investigative reports. Finally, they conclude that the newspaper took a critical stance towards fake news, emphasizing the importance of journalistic accuracy, balance, and coherence. In the case of this article, there is no doubt about the local approach since the authors analyze how global disinformation manifests in a local or provincial newspaper.

Finally, Rodríguez-Ferrándiz et al. (2021) propose to observe the local environment as an ideal setting for creating and broadcasting unverified information. The authors focus on addressing the capability of local hoaxes to embrace memetic practices and become “glocal” meme hoaxes. To achieve this objective, they first monitored local media, fact-checking websites, and social media to identify a sample of 35 local hoaxes related to COVID-19 in the Alicante province of Spain. In a second moment, they focus more on a subset of 11 hoaxes identified as “meme hoaxes”. Among the main conclusions, we highlight a significant portion of the disinformation hoaxes exhibited memetic qualities, such as the ability to be replicated, mutated, and adapted to local contexts. The results also suggest that local hoaxes are not limited to non-transferable local circumstances but can also lead to the spread of other hoaxes to different areas, which are easily adaptable to the local context. The local dimension is evident in this study, as it focuses on the spread of local misinformation memes during the first year of the pandemic.

Although it was only in these five articles that we found, in the title, abstract or keywords, references to terms that refer to disinformation at a local or regional level, we looked for other articles that could somehow refer to this approach, even without making this reference. In an analysis of the different articles that make up the sample, we realized that some articles effectively address issues from a perspective that could be considered local or regional, such as the article by Cano-Orón et al. (2019), which focuses on the analysis of campaigns for two electoral acts in Spain, or the article by Pérez-Curiel and Velasco-Molpeceres (2020), which analyzes disinformation related to specific events in Catalonia (14-O), but from posts by national fact-checking agencies on Twitter. These articles are good examples of how certain topics in the field of disinformation end up being addressed in a logic that, in this article, we consider to be neither local nor regional, firstly because most of the objects of study do not have this dimension, as for example in the case of Pérez-Curiel and Velasco-Molpeceres (2020) in which the analysis of an event in a region or community ends up being done through publications from a national fact-checking agency. The approach we find in the articles by Rodríguez-Ferrándiz et al. (2021) or that of Fernández-Barrero et al. (2024) are good examples of what we understand by investigations effectively focused on the study of disinformation from a local and regional point of view, firstly because, in both cases, the object of study also has this dimension. However, it is also important to highlight that the terms used in the research, which gave rise to the sample that served as the basis for this study, may have contributed significantly to the small number of articles. Other works in the Iberian context have been dedicated to studying disinformation at a local and regional level but were not included in the sample due to the combination of search terms. We refer, for example, to the work of Jerónimo and Esparza (2023), who, through interviews with journalists from twelve regional media outlets in Portugal and Spain, seek to analyze perceptions and practices regarding fact-checking; or the work of Alcaide-Pulido (2023) focused on helping local journalists combat disinformation; we also talk about the work of Torre and Jerónimo (2023), who focus the discussion on the importance of the local public sphere as a way of combating local disinformation; or even the work of Rúas-Araújo et al. (2023), focused on understanding how local media newsrooms deal with misinformation. These are just a few examples that help to demonstrate, on the one hand, the limitations of this research, which will also be explored in the next point, but also the reason why we consider that a large part of the studies on disinformation do not have the local and regional dimension as a concern.

5. Final considerations

The digital era has changed how information is shared and consumed, allowing disinformation to circulate rapidly and widely. As societies confront the impacts of this widespread problem, it's clear that disinformation is not uniform, as it varies significantly across different regions and communities. The variety in how disinformation is expressed requires a nuanced understanding of the issue and calls for an academic investigation that considers disinformation expressions at the local and regional levels. This article explores academic research on disinformation, focusing on recent studies conducted in Portugal and Spain. By analyzing how these research efforts mirror the local realities of disinformation, we aim to identify potential gaps in existing research and highlight the need for different approaches that enhance the theoretical discussion on disinformation and offer valuable insights for effective interventions at both regional and local levels.

Through the analysis, we realized that in our sample of academic publications from Portugal and Spain, disinformation is mainly framed as a growing and multifaceted problem that affects contemporary democratic societies. The articles explore several dimensions, emphasizing the impact and consequences of disinformation, the sources and channels of disseminating false content, the types and characteristics of disinformation, the responses and strategies to combat this problem, the role of journalists and the media, and vulnerability to misinformation. It is also important to highlight that in the articles covering the period from 2019 to 2025, the Covid-19 pandemic still has a great relevance. In short, and answering the first research question (RQ1), we can say that the articles characterize disinformation as a complex problem with several dimensions, which affect trust in the media, political institutions, and public health, highlighting the need for a multifaceted approach to combating misinformation, which should involve education, fact-checking, legislation and promoting transparency.

On the other hand, and considering the main focus of this work, we realized, through the analysis of the articles from the sample, that regional and local dimensions of disinformation are little addressed. We detected fewer direct references to this approach. In other cases, although the investigations may address regional contexts, the chosen objects of study are always national or global. Thus, and answering the second research question (RQ2), the study reveals critical gaps in existing literature, particularly in how local and regional realities are considered in the study of disinformation. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing more effective strategies to combat disinformation. By aligning academic research more closely with local and regional realities, scholars can provide more valuable insights that inform policy-making and practical interventions tailored to specific communities affected by disinformation. The advocacy for a multifaceted understanding of disinformation highlights the complexity of the issue and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in addressing it holistically. On the other hand, enhancing collaboration between researchers, local communities, and policymakers can facilitate a more nuanced understanding of disinformation and lead to more robust solutions tailored to specific contexts. Finally, considering what methodologies have been predominantly used in the examination of disinformation in the academic articles analyzed and how these methodologies shape findings (RQ3), the results show that the articles prioritize content analysis, surveys and interviews, leaving out, for example, case studies, which allowed many local and regional realities to be accounted for. Therefore, there is a pressing need for more localized research methodologies that account for the unique socio-cultural dynamics of local and regional communities. This approach will enrich theoretical frameworks and enhance the relevance of findings to practitioners working on the ground.

The current lack of scientific publications examining disinformation in local and regional contexts highlights a critical gap in our understanding. However, this shortfall also offers a valuable opportunity to push for focused research that reveals the vulnerabilities and dynamics of disinformation at these levels. By emphasizing this knowledge gap, we can encourage policymakers to craft context-specific strategies, allocate funding for local research initiatives, and advocate for tailored approaches to combat harmful narratives. Additionally, this scarcity of relevant scientific literature can inspire and energize local media and media literacy campaigns. Local media have the potential to act as investigators, fostering trust by tackling disinformation in their communities. Media literacy programs should highlight essential skills applicable to any setting while also promoting and developing educational efforts that are specifically designed for local contexts. In conclusion, the limited local research emphasizes the need for its development and highlights the importance of empowering local stakeholders to comprehend and mitigate the effects of disinformation in their unique environments.

In this context, it is easy to anticipate future recommendations, which necessarily involve understanding how this phenomenon manifests itself and specifically impacts smaller geographic contexts closer to the citizen. This need arises because local news sources enjoy greater credibility with the public than national media outlets. There are limited resources in local media for fact-checking. However, these contexts also have very particular vulnerabilities that cannot be combated appropriately if not studied. On the other hand, it is necessary to understand whether local journalists need specific training in fact-checking to combat disinformation and fulfil their role in society. Research can contribute to identifying best practices and training needs for these professionals. Finally, studies are needed to consider how quickly misinformation adapts to local issues, using community-specific themes and concerns to spread effectively. By studying local disinformation, it is possible to identify and understand how these dynamics work and develop more effective countermeasures. In short, studies at the local level are essential to understand the nuances of disinformation, to empower local media outlets and to develop effective strategies adapted to the reality of each community.

Although we consider the study necessary, we are aware of its limitations, which involve not all research outputs being indexed in bibliographic databases, leading to data gaps and skewed results. Different databases also have varying coverage across disciplines and publication types. In line with what happens in other bibliometric scientific articles, and although they offer valuable insights into research trends, citations, and the impact of publication, in this work, we also recognize that the results are limited by the availability and quality of data from bibliographic databases, and in the particular case of articles on disinformation at local and regional level, we know that there are articles that have this approach but that are not indexed in major databases. On the other hand, it is also essential to consider that research, expressed through scientific articles, often has a time lag, meaning there may already be research on the subject. Still, it has not yet been published, especially if we consider each time there will be a longer delay in article evaluation processes. We must also consider as limitations the fact that searches in databases are dependent on algorithms, which sometimes may not accurately reflect the complexity of research impact and collaboration patterns. Finally, by focusing on scientific articles, and although these are some of the most important elements from the point of view of science dissemination, we leave out other forms of scientific expression, such as projects, books, datasets, and policy briefs that can also contribute significantly to a field. Recognizing these limitations is essential to understand that the work carried out, despite offering significant contributions, has room for improvement, especially considering the urgency of combating disinformation at the local and regional levels.

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7. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and Surname
Conception and design of the work	Ricardo Morais and Valeriano Piñeiro-Naval
Methodology	Ricardo Morais and Valeriano Piñeiro-Naval
Data collection and analysis	Ricardo Morais and Valeriano Piñeiro-Naval
Discussion and conclusions	Ricardo Morais
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Ricardo Morais and Valeriano Piñeiro-Naval

8. Conflict of interest

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

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