SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES TO DEFINING, REGULATING AND RESEARCHING ENTITY ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

Nicolai JIERI¹ Violeta CODREAN² Ana Carolina COJOCARU (BĂRBIERU)³

Abstract. In the process of carrying out economic activities, each entity engages with various business partners, governmental bodies, personnel, and others. Consequently, the relationships formed often result in the emergence of receivables, owing to the time delay in meeting financial obligations related to the sale of economic goods or the provision of advances. The main objective of this research is to comprehensively examine the theoretical aspects related to the concept of accounts receivable, including their definition, classification, and regulation. Additionally, it aims to analyze the normative framework at both the national and international levels, considering economic and legal perspectives. Furthermore, this study encompasses an assessment of scientific productivity, the impact of scientific research, trending topics, and other aspects through bibliometric analysis. It's worth noting that the current market conditions underscore the significance of this research topic, where economic agents have the ability to choose their market and business partners. In this context, accounts receivable play a pivotal role in reflecting the economic and financial situation of both parties involved.

Keywords: receivables, accounts receivables, classification, regulation, bibliographic study, bibliometric analysis

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Introduction

As an independent scientific discipline, accounting focuses its research on an entity's assets, which encompasses the entirety of the economic assets it oversees as well as the rights and obligations it assumes concerning the assets it holds.

From an economic standpoint, an entity is an organizational unit where a blend of technical-production, economic-organizational, administrative, and social activities converge. Moreover, this entity is rooted in economic and social endeavors through which individuals produce tangible goods, undertake projects, provide services, and access them through the market.

¹ Nicolai Jieri, PhD student, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, Suceava University "Ştefan cel Mare, România, jierinicolai@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0006-7095-4581

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² Violeta Codrean, Master student, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, <u>codrean.violeta@ase.md</u>, ORCID: 0000-0002-1966-8006

³ Ana Carolina Cojocaru (Bărbieru), PhD student, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, Suceava University "Ștefan cel Mare, România, <u>carolinabarbieru@gmail.com</u>, ORCID: 0000-0001-9271-5932

Every entity plays a distinctive role within the circular flow of economy, characterized by the flow of money and economic goods, categorizing them into at least one of three broad groups: producers, suppliers, or buyers.

In the context of economic activities, a complex system of economic and legal relationships, including rights and obligations, is established. Consequently, these relationships give rise to rights and obligations that vary in nature, such as commercial, financial, fiscal, social, and more. In a market economy, each participant's position determines how accounts receivable and debts materialize from these relationships.

All these are patrimonial relations, which reflect the changes in the forms of existence of the patrimony, involving rights, obligations, and responsibilities; therefore, they are part of the accounting object of study (Sajin, 2010, p. 8).

The relevance of this theme is inherent in the pervasive presence of accounts receivable within every entity. The main objective of each asset unit is to attain its operational goals through the sale of products, service provision, and/or project execution, with the aim of generating profit. Simultaneously, the significance of investigating accounts receivable also emanates from a pragmatic standpoint, as numerous entities grapple with challenges in recovering outstanding receivables, a predicament that has been exacerbated, particularly during the pandemic period.

The purpose of the research is to conduct a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the concept of accounts receivable, employing bibliographic and scientometric methods, with the aim of providing a comprehensive perspective on the extent of research pertaining to this concept at both national and international levels.

In the context of the above, it can be seen that all the relationships of economic agents with third parties are formed and extinguished in an endless chain, each of which has clear terms of maturity, and these relationships in most cases are reciprocal (Grigoroi, 2021, p. 269).

1. Data and Methodology

The methodological approach of the research is characterized by a theoretical and practical approach. In the scientific approach, methodological tools from the social sciences and statistical-mathematical techniques were employed. Various research methods, including analysis, comparison, systems thinking, synthesis, induction, deduction, as well as bibliometric and scientometric methods, were utilized to quantify and analyze specialized literature in the context of research on receivables accounting.

Through the Web of Science platform, an overview of the studies associated with accounting and receivables analysis is presented. In the process of identifying the scientific works that study this issue, the following research parameters were set: the identification of the phrase "receivables" in the subject of the publication in the period 1956-2023. The results obtained were interpreted using the Biblioshiny visualization tool. Based on the research parameters, 537 scientific works published in 391 sources (journals, books, etc.)

were identified based on 12,055 bibliographic references, with the largest share being occupied by articles -313 works.

Figure 1 shows the variation in the number of scientific works published in the period 1956-2023, especially since, the most scientific works were published in 2019 (49 publications), 2021 (47 publications), 2016, 2018 (43 publications), 2020 (42 publications), etc. The demographic distribution of publications shows the most productive countries in terms of publication rate during 1956-2023 which are: the United States of America (131 publications), China (103 publications), the Czech Republic (63 publications), Poland (57 publications), etc. As can be seen, most of the scientific works are of recent date, which can also be explained by the pandemic period that contributed to the procrastination of transactions, in this case, payments to suppliers, which directly involve accounts receivable.

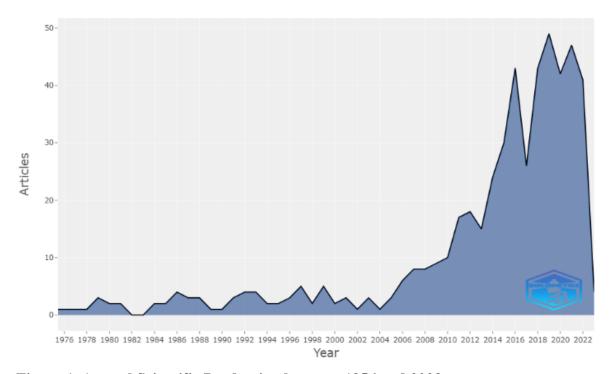


Figure 1. Annual Scientific Production between 1956 and 2023

Source: developed by the author using the Bibliometrix R toolkit

The factorial analysis based on keywords highlights the most relevant words used by the authors of the scientific papers, which outline the research direction of the papers. So, the researchers give priority to the words (figure 2): "receivables", "trade credit", "profitability", "working capital management", "accounts receivable", "working capital", "insolvency", "receivables management", etc.

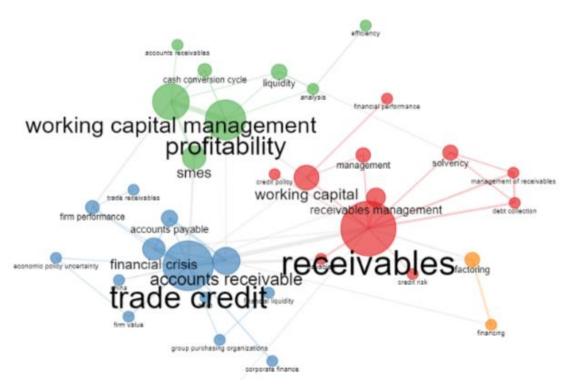


Figure 2. Co-occurrence network of words in the period between 1956 and 2023

Source: developed by the author using the Bibliometrix R toolkit

Trend topics outline the framework of researchers' interest, therefore, figure 3 summarizes the keywords of the authors of scientific works within a coordinate system according to the degree of relevance (horizontal axis) and the degree of development (vertical axis). So, in the period 1956-2023, the words: "receivables", "receivables management", "accounts receivables", "profitability", "solvency", "analysis" etc., are in the basic themes quadrant, which denotes topicality and interest from researchers. Likewise, it can be concluded that during the research period, the words: "factoring", "supply chain finance", "risk management" etc. were located in the emerging or declining themes quadrant, with researchers' interest moving towards the current themes quadrant. At the same time, the words can be found in the niche themes quadrant: "regression analysis", "econometric testing", economic and fiscal policy" etc. which indicates the research of some niche topics on certain types of activity, sizes and typologies of businesses.

Summarizing, the combined and consistent application of research methods contributes to the formation of scientific arguments related to accounting and accounts receivable analysis. In the same vein, it can be noted that from 1956 until 2023, there has been at least one scientific publication in this research direction; likewise, receivables are of interest to researchers in the direction of accounting and their management, which can be seen in keywords networks used and related titles.

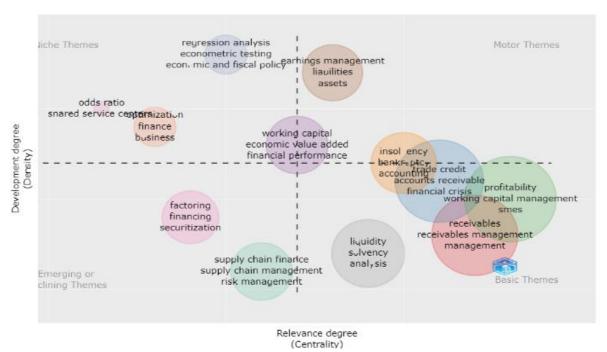


Figure 3. Thematic map regarding the degree of relevance and development of research during the period 1956 and 2023

Source: developed by the author using the Bibliometrix R toolkit

2. Literature review

The economic and legal relationships established to accomplish the entity's objectives result in the emergence of accounts receivable due to delays in meeting financial obligations related to the sale of economic goods or the provision of advances.

Etymologically, the term "creanțe"(rom.) (eng. Receivable) is borrowed from French "créance", which in turn was borrowed from Latin "credentia". In this sense, the Etymological Dictionary of the French language provides that the origin, formal and semantic evolution of the term "créance" comes from medieval Latin, from the word "croire", called etymon from a linguistic point of view, that is, the word of origin. Therefore, the author of the Etymological Dictionary of the French language, Clédat, L., claims that "the primitive meaning of the verb "croire" is "to trust", which came into French with the meaning of confession of faith, at the same time, nouns were formed: "crédit", "créditer", "discréditer", "accréditer", and the Latin derivative "credentia" gave a triple form: "crédence", "créance", "croyance"" (Clédat, 1914, p.155). Synthesizing the semantic peculiarities and the economic meaning of the term "receivable", in the course of carrying out the economic activity, the entity manifests an act of faith in relation to the debtor regarding the collection of the consideration under the conditions and terms established in the case of sale with deferred payment.

In the same vein, the explanatory dictionary of the Romanian language defines receivable as "the creditor's right to demand from the debtor to give, do or not do

something" (Coteanu, 2009). Also, the Academic Dictionary comes with a much more exhaustive scientific approach, emphasizing the monetary equivalent, noting that receivable is a "right that the creditor has over a sum of money owed to him, right to demand from the debtor to give, do or not do something" (Coteanu, 2010). The same treatment is attested in the Dictionary of Neologisms (Marcu, 2000), which confirms the authenticity of the explanation given that it is a borrowed word from another language.

After determining the properties of the notion of "receivable", it becomes essential to crystallize the definition from an economic and legal point of view. As a result, according to the National Accounting Standard (hereinafter NAS) "Receivables and financial investments", receivables represent "rights of the entity arising from past transactions or events and from the settlement of which inflows (increases) of resources embodying economic benefits are expected" (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 4).

The bibliographic study in the area of accounting and receivables analysis at the national and international levels contributed to the synthesis of different approaches regarding the definition of accounts receivable. Therefore, the author Mihaila, S. claims that the accounts receivable represent "a component of the assets that represent the right of the entity vis-à-vis other natural and legal entities, which appear as debt to the given entity" (Grigoroi, 2021, p. 269). Also, a similar approach is attested in the work of researchers Țurcanu, V. and Bajerean, E., who mention that receivables include "the debts of other legal and natural entities towards the given entity; they appear, as a rule, on commercial invoices unpaid by buyers, advances granted due to overpayments of funds in the budget, insurance bodies, employees, etc." (Țurcanu, 2004, p. 37). Therefore, both approaches support the idea that the accounts receivable constitute a debt of a natural and/or legal entity towards the entity, the latter bringing concrete examples of occurrence.

Romanian researchers Mehedinți, I. L. and Negoescu, Gh. emphasize the temporary advancement of economic values, specifying that accounts receivable reflect "the economic values temporarily ascertained by the owner of the assets in relation to other natural and legal entities from whom a value equivalent is to be received" (Mehedinți, 2000, p. 169). Based on the proposed definition, a similar opinion is identified in the work of Professor Bojian, O., which characterizes the receivables as "economic values temporarily advanced by the property owner to other legal or natural entities and for which they will receive the equivalent value" (Bojian, 1997, p. 212).

At the same time, analyzing different approaches regarding the definition of accounts receivable, several authors emphasize the participants of economic transactions, traditionally called debtors and creditors. In this sense, the authors Ristea, M., Dumitru, C. G. and others, mention that "all natural or legal entities who have benefited from the advanced value are generically referred to by the notion of debtors, i.e., persons who in the framework of an economic relationship have received a value and are to give a value equivalent or consideration, both natural and legal entities towards which the unit has monetary obligations, are generically called creditors, therefore, the persons who, within

an economic relationship, have advanced an economic value and are to receive a value equivalent or a consideration" (Ristea, 2009, p.371).

Summarizing the results of the bibliographic study, it can be concluded that the approaches regarding the definition of accounts receivable highlighted above are shared by several authors in their works, such as Nederita, A. (Nederiţa, 2003, p. 234), Balteş, N. (Balteş, 2014, p. 141), Bojian, O. (Bojian, 1999, p. 145), Deju, M. (Deju, 2011, p. 318), Grosu V. (Grosu, 2022).

Receivables classification has a decisive role in the process of recognizing and evaluating them in accounting, in the process of adopting decisions by the users of financial-accounting information, as well as in the process of drawing up financial statements. Thus, according to the NAS "Receivables and financial investments", the classification of receivables can be presented as follows (figure 4):

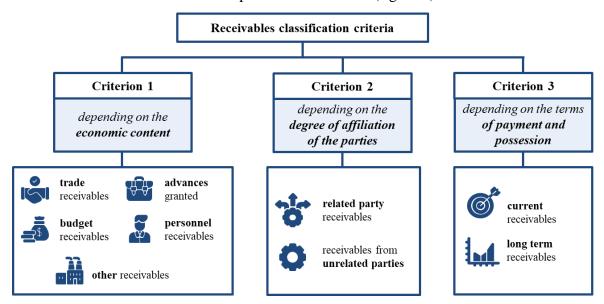


Figure 4. Accounts receivable classification criteria in domestic entities

Source: elaborated by the author based on NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 7

Figure 4 follows the description of each criterion and constituent element. Knowing and applying this information contributes to the efficiency of organizing the analytical and synthetic accounting of receivables, as well as the analysis of financial statements.

Depending on the economic content, the accounts receivable are grouped into trade receivables, advances granted, budget receivables, personnel receivable and other accounts receivable (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 8, 16).

Trade receivables include receivables regarding goods sold, services rendered and works performed. They are recognized and accounted for as soon as the goods are delivered, services are rendered and works are performed (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 17-18).

The advances granted represent the payments made on account of the subsequent procurement of goods, services, works. Within the long-term and short-term advances, the

advances granted for intangible assets, tangible assets and for stocks are highlighted, which are presented in the financial statements, respectively, in the composition of fixed and current assets regardless of the payment term of the advances (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 24).

The budget receivables include taxes and fees paid in advance/instalments, amounts paid in addition to the budget, the difference between the value added tax taken into account and calculated, the amount of VAT related to advances received, indirect taxes to be refunded and others in accordance with the legislation in force. These are recognized and accounted as an increase in receivables and a decrease in cash or an increase in current liabilities (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 27-28).

Personnel receivables include advances granted on the salary account, amounts granted to advance holders, accounts receivable regarding the recovery of material damage and other personnel receivables, these are recognized and accounted as an increase in personnel receivables, income or current liabilities and a decrease in cash (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 29-32).

Other receivables include receivables regarding the recovery of losses, receivables regarding complaints submitted and recognized, receivables from social and medical insurance bodies (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 33), receivables regarding income from the use by third parties of the entity's assets, preliminary receivables, receivables regarding the exit of fixed and current assets, receivables regarding subsidies, financing and receipts with special purpose, related to the public-private partnership (Grigoroi, 2021, p.270).

Depending on the degree of affiliation of the parties, receivables are divided into *receivables of related and unrelated parties*. Thus, according to NAS "Related parties and civil contracts", the related parties are "legal or natural entities that have the ability to control or are controlled, have significant influence or are significantly influenced by the other party in financial and operational policies" (NAS "Related parties and civil contracts", 2013, p. 4). In the composition of the receivables of the related parties, the receivables related to participation interests are highlighted (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 9). According to the Law on Accounting and Financial Reporting, the participation interest represents "the rights of an entity within another entity that exceed 20% of the latter's share capital, rights that, by creating a long-term strategic link with it, are intended to contribute to the activity of the entity that owns them" (Law on Accounting and Financial Reporting, 2017, art.3, paragraph (1)). In the other cases, the accounts receivable will be considered as part of unrelated parties.

Depending on the terms of payment and possession, receivables are divided into *current and long-term receivables*. Receivables are considered current if the payment term does not exceed 12 months from the reporting date. In the other cases, they are treated as long-term receivables (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013, p. 10).

Following the research carried out, it can be found that the classification of accounts receivable is characterized by a variety of applied criteria, moreover, professors Sajin, I. and

Nederita, A. are of the opinion that "all these classifications are not complete, and the classification criteria do not correspond to the information users' requirements" (Sajin, 2010, p.26), proposing additional classification criteria such as: record currency (in national currency and in foreign currency), degree of maturity fixation (chargeable and non-chargeable), the degree of security of collection (certain and uncertain), recognition mode (contingent and non-contingent), contractual clauses (convertible and non-convertible).

In research practice, the mixing of quantitative research and qualitative research is used in order to combine the advantages of the two methods, which encompasses the research methodology. As a result, figure 5 summarizes the bibliographic sources used in the approach to researching the problem of accounts receivable, having as a theoretical foundation one of the three directions of receivables research - receivables accounting.

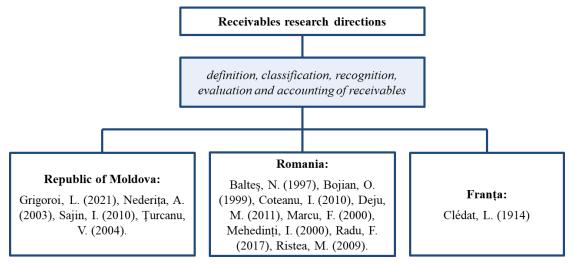


Figure 5. Bibliographic study of the relevant literature at national and international levels *Source: developed by the author*

Based on figure 5, it can be concluded that the problem of accounts receivable is widely addressed both at the national and international levels. As a result, we notice that the first direction of research, aimed at the definition, classification, recognition, evaluation and accounting of receivables, has the greatest development in the works of the authors, with the majority of opinions based on the provisions of the normative framework. At the same time, the research in the direction of the economic-financial analysis of receivables resulted in fewer bibliographic sources, which can be explained by the tendency of the authors to present the general analysis of the entity's assets situation, as well as the indirect influence of the business environment that materializes through the decision the management of the entity to carry out the analysis of its financial performance and to identify the directions for improvement or not, considering keeping accounting sufficient. Likewise, the study of the comparative aspects regarding the notion and balance sheet position of receivables at national and international level, allowed the outline of a general opinion regarding the notion of receivables, which hovers over the existence of customer

obligations towards entities and the deduction of positions considered appropriate for disclosure to users of financial-accounting information.

3. Review of the normative framework

Accounting and its role in social life have continuously evolved, successively going through the stages of recording technique, organization of commercial transactions, control tool, element of evidence in case of litigation, information base for the management of the entity, with an increasing emphasis the higher on the estimation of further developments. All these changes were accompanied by legal regulations that sought to support or guide its development (Radu, 2017, p.13).

According to local scientists Sajin, I. and Nederita, A., "there are no normative acts that would specifically regulate the accounting of receivables, for this reason, in domestic and international accounting practice, a clear delimitation cannot be made between receivables and financial instruments, which present different assertions when preparing financial statements" (Sajin, 2010, p.191-192).

The general criteria regarding the definition, composition, method of recognition and evaluation, method of formation and extinguishment of receivables are regulated by the NAS "Receivables and financial investments", at the same time, accounts receivable are regulated, indirectly, by a series of normative and legislative acts, such as: codes, laws, standards, decisions and orders, presented in figure 6.

Based on the information presented in figure 6, the repercussions of the main normative acts in relation to the regulation of accounts receivable of domestic entities are reproduced:

- Tax Code of the Republic of Moldova (hereafter RM) (Tax code, 1997) represents the most important fiscal legislative act at the national level, which regulates the accounting of receivables from a fiscal point of view, establishes the cases in which the receivables are non-reimbursable [art. 5, paragraph (32)], the cases that allow the deduction of any bad debt [art. 31, para. (1)] and the cases in which the transfer of VAT takes place or the circumstances in which expenses with compromised accounts receivable are not deducted for tax purposes.
- Law on Accounting and Financial Reporting (Lax on Accounting and financial reporting, 2017) establishes the general principles of organizing and keeping the accounts receivable of domestic entities, of documenting economic operations involving credit sales, of perfecting the accounting registers, of inventorying the receivables, of recording and presenting them in the financial statements, as well as in the explanatory notes.

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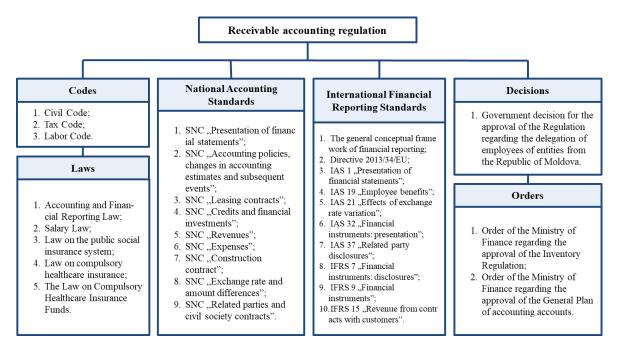


Figure 6. Accounts receivable regulation at national and international levels

Source: developed by the author

- NAS "Receivables and financial investments" (NAS "Receivables and financial investments", 2013) constitutes the main normative act in order to regulate receivables, establishing the unanimous context regarding the classification, recognition, evaluation, accounting and presentation of information regarding accounts receivable and financial investments, likewise, the standard meets practitioners with concrete examples of calculation and accounting.
- NAS "Differences in currency exchange rate and amount" (NAS "Differences in currency exchange rate and amount", 2013) provides for the calculation and accounting of favorable and unfavorable exchange rate differences, the amount differences, presenting the arrangement of the accounting of the differences on the reporting date, obliging the entities to recalculate the monetary elements in foreign currency by applying the official exchange rate of the Moldovan leu on the reporting date [pt. 11].
- The general chart of accounts (The general chart of accounts, 2013) regulates the way of recording economic facts regarding receivables in synthetic and analytical accounts, in compliance with the principles, norms and accounting policies of the entity. In order to keep the accounting records of receivables, in the chart of accounts, three receivables accounts are reserved in the class of fixed assets (I), group 16 "Long-term receivables and advances" and ten receivables accounts in the class of current assets (II), groups 22 "Trade and estimated receivables" and 23 "Other current receivables".

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- *Directive 2013/34/EU* (Directive, 2013) provides for the vertical and horizontal structure (format) of the balance sheet and the position of receivables, which include: trade receivables, amounts to be collected from affiliated enterprises, amounts to be collected from enterprises to which the enterprise is linked by virtue of participation interests, other receivables [p. 46]. Also, Directive 2013/34/EU and the general conceptual framework for financial reporting are at the basis of the development of NASs.
- International Accounting Standard 32, Financial instruments: presentation" (IAS 32, 2008) states that an example of financial assets is accounts receivable [AG3], representing a contractual right to collect cash in the future. In this regard, the standard provides as an example financial leasing, which creates a right of the lessor to receive and an obligation of the lessee to pay, according to a loan agreement, the lessor accounting for its investment in the receivable under a financial leasing contract [AG9].
- *International Financial Reporting Standard 9 "Financial instruments"* (IFRS 9, 2008) stipulates that upon initial recognition, an entity must evaluate trade receivables at their transaction price (as defined in IFRS 15 "Revenue from Contracts with Customers") [p. 5.1.3]. At the same time, the entity must evaluate a financial asset at: amortized cost, fair value through other elements of comprehensive income or fair value through profit or loss [p. 5.2.1].

Consequently, the analysis of the normative framework allowed the review of the normative acts that regulate the definition, classification, recognition, evaluation and accounting of receivables both at national and international levels, making up the legal component of accounts receivable research.

Conclusions

Accounts receivable play a significant role within every entity and influence key aspects of effective financial management, performance and financial stability of the entity. In this work, emphasis was placed on the examination of the theoretical aspects regarding the concept of accounts receivable, its presence in specialized literature and scientific works at national and international levels.

Following the research carried out, it can be concluded that accounts receivable enjoy a wide spectrum of definitions in the specialized literature, with some authors emphasizing the participants in economic relations, others focusing on the temporary advancement of economic values, etc. Likewise, it can be observed that the classification of receivables has a broader approach in the specialized literature than the one presented by the normative framework, as the authors are of the opinion that the classification criteria must correspond to the requirements of the information users.

From a bibliographic and bibliometric analysis perspective, accounts receivable represent a contemporary and pertinent subject across various economic dimensions.

Consequently, it is crucial to examine receivables from an economic impact standpoint, as the management of receivables and the risk of default can have far-reaching implications for the overall economy.

Summarizing the bibliographic sources analyzed during the research on accounts receivable, three main research directions have emerged: accounting, analysis, and the international interpretation of receivables. Consequently, the bibliographic and bibliometric study of receivables analysis and international comparative aspects will serve as objectives for future research.

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