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Social intervention and social work: an inalienable link. A survey of the scientific literature in WoS, Scopus and SciELO

Intervención social y trabajo social: un vínculo inalienable. Estudio a la literatura científica en WoS, Scopus y SciELO

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Abstract

Social work and social intervention have an indelible link, and both are an epochal fruit: they do not exist outside the context of modernity. This article presents the results of a bibliometric study, focusing its work on a construct of conceptual units. Three approaches were made to the scientific literature in WoS, Scopus and SciELO databases, revealing significant differences in the volume of publications, sources and periods covered. Annual scientific production

Keywords:
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shows a sustained increase, although with different patterns. The predominant languages are English and Spanish. The analysis of the scientific output by country identifies that, in WoS, Spain stands out, followed by the USA and the United Kingdom; in Scopus, production is led by the USA, the United Kingdom and Spain, while in SciELO, Colombia appears in first place, followed by Brazil and Chile. The analysis of categories and thematic areas reveals that in WoS, the most represented discipline is Social Work; in Scopus, the dominant thematic area is Medicine, and in SciELO, it is interdisciplinary social sciences. In the analysis of the sources of publication and application of Bradford's Law, it stands out that in WoS, the leading journals linked to the dissemination of discussions related to social intervention belong to the discipline of social work, in Scopus medical and multidisciplinary journals predominate, and in SciELO social science and interdisciplinary journals appear with a more significant presence.

Resumen

El trabajo social y la intervención social poseen un vínculo indeleble, y ambas son un fruto epocal: no existen fuera del contexto de la modernidad. Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio bibliométrico, centrando su quehacer en un constructo, vale decir, en unidades conceptuales. Se realizaron tres aproximaciones a la literatura científica en bases de datos WoS, Scopus y SciELO, revelando diferencias significativas en volumen de publicaciones, fuentes y periodos cubiertos. La producción científica anual muestra un alza sostenida, aunque con patrones diferentes. Los idiomas predominantes son inglés y español. El análisis a la producción científica por países identifica que, en WoS destaca España, seguido por EEUU y Reino Unido, en Scopus la producción es liderada por EEUU, Reino Unido y España, mientras que en SciELO aparece en primer lugar Colombia, seguido por Brasil y Chile. El análisis de categorías y áreas temáticas revela que en WoS la disciplina más representada es Trabajo social, en Scopus, el área temática dominante es Medicina y en SciELO es ciencias sociales interdisciplinarias. En el análisis a las fuentes de publicación y aplicación de la Ley de Bradford, destaca que en WoS las principales revistas vinculadas a la difusión de discusiones relativas a la intervención social, se adscriben a la disciplina de trabajo social, en Scopus predominan revistas médicas y multidisciplinarias, y en SciELO aparecen con mayor presencia revistas de ciencias sociales y humanidades. Los hallazgos invitan a reconocer y reafirmar que para trabajo social su objeto disciplinar es indefectiblemente la intervención social.

Palabras Clave:
trabajo social; intervención social; bibliometría; Ley de Bradford; producción científica



Introduction

For Agamben, terminology “is the poetic moment of thought” (2019, p.14), referring to the importance of terminological questions in philosophy. From linguistics, the terminology is the expression set that names “the notions that form a thematised area of knowledge” (Lerat, 1997, p.17). Terms are double-sided symbolic units: that of expression, morphological structure, and content, in which the notion or concept referred to by the denomination is represented (Cabr , 1993, p.195). Discursive objects are not independent of the context and place of enunciation; to enunciate presupposes the linguistic use of the word, whose function is to mobilise language. To enunciate is to present a point of view, including the non-explicit, so there are experiences of knowledge and, therefore, pretensions of validity (Y   ez-Pereira, 2021). Hence, without words and terminology, the concept is truncated, trapped in the idea, and without the possibility of definition.

Naming is the way of calling an object or class of objects by name (Lerat, 1997). However, naming is not summed up in the denomination or the concept since it implies designation in the enunciation. Naming makes appear, lets us see since the meaning is not found in their descriptions, but in their significance, that is, in what they create (C rdenas-Mar n, 2016; Santamaria, 2001).

Strictly speaking, when we name, we put tension on the terms, their concepts and their definitions; in enunciation, we hope to establish an interface of communicative understanding with the other and its othernesses. Wittgenstein (2001) and Kripke (1995) point out that by naming, we validate an object and give it meaning. For Frege (2002), such objects find a place. Now, names and the words that project them will mean nothing if they are not recognised within utterances because only there their intentionalities are well expressed (Searle, 2017). By naming, then, we can expand the terms and thus provide them with observable references (Putnam, 1996).

In light of the above, this paper explores the concept of social intervention, recognising it “as a thematic, discursive, technical and political field” (Mu  oz Arce, 2018b, p.6) and as a field of analysis and action for various disciplines and professions (Berm dez-Pe a, 2012; Carballeda, 2002; Estrada, 2010), but with special and central interest for the discipline of social work, since social intervention, both in its ethical, epistemological and methodological dimensions, stands for the discipline as a founding milestone (Zurita-Castillo, 2021), source of identity, and *leitmotiv* of disciplinary existence

(Saavedra, 2017), anchored in the historical dimension of disciplinary construction (Rubilar-Donoso, 2009).

In this case, the term social intervention will be assumed as a construct, that is, a conceptual construction with explanatory validity which, possessing a theoretical definition and, therefore, referential, can also be observable through epistemic and methodological mediations (Yáñez-Pereira, 2007).

As a construct, in social intervention, there coexist multiple enunciative places around its nature (Saavedra, 2017); these have been collected by Saavedra (2015) and synthesised into four arguments about the concept of social intervention. The first group of arguments includes the voices that claim it as a practical action: the most notorious authors who are situated in this line have been Ander-Egg (1995), Kisnerman (1997) and Aylwin (1976). Many voices claim it as a discourse, anchored in its character as a device coded in a Foucauldian key (Saavedra, 2015). A third line of argument can also be distinguished, which situates the nature of social intervention as an essentially interpretative process: “There is no intervention without social interpretation” (Matus, 2001, p.27). A final line of argument is woven by defining social intervention as a distinction of functional social systems, translating social intervention as the capacity for “communicative selection of systems and their self-regulated viability” (Saavedra, 2015, p.141). In this line, Robles (2002) and Mascareño (2011) are grouped under the general umbrella of Luhmann’s postulates.

In the multiplicity of previous voices, it could be said that today there is a consensus; social intervention stands as an epochal fruit: it does not exist outside the context of modernity (Muñoz, 2011; Saavedra, 2015), overcoming today’s debates of the last century, which strained the nature of intervention (and of the discipline of social work), linking it with protoforms of charitable actions. Social intervention is anchored in the ideology of modernity, assuming “a logic of understanding the real that is opposed to sacred, immobile and ontological conceptions” (Muñoz, 2011, p.86), questioning the social order as given, immobile or unalterable, but rather assuming it as a space that can be modified and transformed by human action, but within the framework of asymmetrical power relations (Méndez, 2012).

There have also been many attempts to define social intervention conceptually. Perhaps one of the most recurrent in the last decades of the previous century was that proposed

by Ezequiel Ander-Egg, describing it as “the set of activities carried out in a more or less systematic and organised way, to act on an aspect of social reality to produce a determined impact” (1995, p.161). Close to this line is the operative definition proposed by Fantova, who defines it as “an activity that is carried out in a formal or organised manner, attempting to respond to social needs and, specifically, to significantly influence people’s interaction, aspiring to public or social legitimisation” (2007, p.183); a definition with apparent similarities with the proposal of Corvalán, who conceives it as “the organised action of a group of individuals in the face of unresolved social problems in society, based on its basic dynamics” (Corvalán, 1996, p.4), while distinguishing two types of intervention: charitable-assistance and socio-political, a distinction that highlights two possibilities in social intervention: its disciplining character and, as a counterpart, its emancipating character. In agreement with the above is Carballada’s definition, when he affirms “a set of assistance and insurance devices in the function of maintaining the order or cohesion of what we call society” (2002, p. 97-98).

Departing from the previous conceptualisation searches, we find the definition proposed by Margarita Rozas Pagaza, who understands “intervention as a *problematic field insofar* as it constitutes the daily scenario where the manifestations of the social question are objectified and which reconfigure the social world of the subjects” (Rozas-Pagaza, 2010, p.46). Bermúdez Peña (2012) agrees with this proposal, locating social intervention as a field in a Bourdieusian key. Both proposals are in favour of clarifying the disciplinary field of social work, which, in one way or another, gathers conceptualisations that can be exported at least to other social sciences. Social intervention would then be a key construct for problematisations, discussions and disciplinary stakes.

Particularly relevant for this study is the lucid and synthetic definition proposed by Muñoz Arce, who defines social intervention as “the epistemological and politically constructed and planned process for the achievement of a change that is considered desirable” (Muñoz, 2011, p.85), and she goes on to point out that social intervention is constructed and unfolds, while at the same time, it is tensioned by two opposing logics: “rights (...) and the conditions produced by capitalism, as a model, and the market, as its operator” (Muñoz, 2011, p.87). In short, it represents a key to interpreting the relational and intentional processes in which social work participates, based on the production and reproduction of everyday life, deciphered as demands for change. In this regard, as Karsz (2009) would say, along with rescuing its places of enunciation from social intervention, it is possible to proliferate theoretical, ideological and subjective registers that favour understanding for social transformation, as it is configured and reconfigured

within complex dialectical tensions, between systems and lifeworlds (Habermas, 1989), structures and citizens' lives (Yáñez-Pereira, 2016).

In short, the article is located in the heart of the discipline's discussions, recognising that these are fundamental for the comprehensive analysis, not only of what intervention designates but also of the way of understanding it and giving it meaning, in its relations with the past and the contemporary, giving meaning to the processes of incidence and social transformation that social work promotes. Consequently, the scientific review of the propositions and positions from which social intervention is thought and projected imply diametrical differences when conceiving it as operations within a procedural structure (Fernández, 2008) or as a "thematic, discursive, technical and political field" (Muñoz-Arce, 2018, p.6). Such issues undoubtedly respond to a constant work of knowledge production for its proliferation (Facuse, 2003), that is, for the elaboration and theoretical recreation of its innovation (Yáñez-Pereira, 2023).

In short, problematising intervention is necessary for legitimising its enunciative potential, not only at a historical level but, above all, in its everyday implications in the disciplinary task.

Methodology

The issue of scientific knowledge is marked by each historical period (Foucault, 2009); currently, academic journals (Muñoz-Arce and Rubilar-Donoso, 2022) are one of the most common means of disseminating scientific research results (Rubilar-Donoso, 2024; Martínez Sánchez et al., 2014). Based on the above, it was proposed to analyse the concept of *social intervention* in academic publications and scientific journals by means of a quantitative (Letelier et al., 2005; Sánchez-Meca, 2010), cross-sectional (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014) and exploratory/descriptive (Chamblas et al., 2001) research, seeking to serve as a starting point for future research on the concept.

The research used a bibliometric methodological design (Hinojo-Lucena et al., 2019; Zurita-Castillo et al., 2024), favouring a retrospective enquiry to research publications that favours the search, selection, analysis and synthesis of information (Sánchez Martín et al., 2022), recognising its potential for analytical fruitfulness (Mukherjee et al., 2022). The bibliometric design follows the guidelines proposed by Massimo Aria and Corrado Cuccurullo (2017), taking up the contributions of Öztürk et al. (2024), focusing on a specific domain that is manifested in a construct (Mukherjee et al., 2022) of conceptual units.

Three bibliometric scans were carried out on 18 March 2024 to: [1] Web of Science main collection, in indexes: Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) and Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), [2] Scopus catalogue, and [3] SciELO collection database, specifically the SciELO Citation Index, [on WoS platform], using the search equations detailed in table 1:

Table 1. Search equations by database

Database	Search equation
[1] WoS	(TS=(“social intervention”)) OR TS=(“social intervention”)
[2] Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (“social intervention”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (“social intervention”))
[3] SciELO	(TS=(“social intervention”)) OR TS=(“social intervention”)

The three search equations are synthesised in the investigation of the concept of *social intervention* in Spanish and English, in title, abstract and keywords [in WoS *Keywords Plus* is added], without adding other exclusion criteria, such as years, disciplines, countries, or others, to broadly characterise the concept and its use in the scientific literature.

Data analysis

Once the set of studies that made up the analysis corpus had been detected, bibliometric information was extracted from the databases used. These data were exported in *Bibtex* (Bib) and *comma-separated values* (CSV) format. The Rstudio software was used for the analysis, specifically the R package Bibliometrix, which includes the Biblioshiny graphical interface (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Soler et al., 2020).

Method of analysis

A descriptive statistical analysis of the scientific landscape around the concept studied was carried out, following the guidelines of Rodríguez-Soler et al. (2020), using the scientific mapping by standard flow (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017), which included a general description of the results, an analysis of the evolution of the annual scientific production, followed by an examination of the scientific production by language and country. Fourthly, a descriptive analysis is made of disciplinary, thematic areas and categories linked to the concept of social intervention.



Fifthly, using publication sources as the unit of analysis, a descriptive analysis is carried out of the most relevant journals regarding the number of papers published on the concept studied. For the same unit of analysis, their impact is examined in terms of their *h-index* (Hirsch, 2005). The *h-index* is often preferable to other numerical criteria, as it better expresses the visibility value of research productivity (Chacín-Bonilla, 2012), establishing “a measure of position, (...) in which the volume of citations is less than or equal to the article’s rank in a descending distribution of citations” (Scimago Group, 2006, p.304). Complementarily, the *g-index* is used, which “compensates for the impact of articles with several citations higher than the *h-index* (...) and the *m-index*, which divides *h* by the number of years of research career, to prevent new researchers from being disadvantaged” (Túñez-López et al., 2014, p. 897-898).

The central analysis of the study is carried out with the application of Bradford’s Law (1934), also known as the “law of dispersion of scientific literature” (Patron et al., 2019, p.29). This law allows for identifying the core of the most relevant journals in a field, illustrating the distribution of scientific production in 3 zones, based on the total number of papers published by each source, where each of the zones contains an equivalent number of articles (Desai et al., 2018) but with an unequal number of associated sources. Journals placed in zone 1 are identified as central and most relevant to the field. Bradford’s central hypothesis states that most papers “may be being published by a few journals especially dedicated to that subject” (Alvarado, 2016, p.53).

Taking the group of journals identified as central by Bradford’s Law in WoS, Scopus and SciELO, a review of the journals’ websites was carried out (Muñoz-Arce et al., 2021), analysing their general definitions framework, identifying whether they explicitly state a link with the discipline of social work.

Results

General information

The results reveal significant differences in the volume of publications, sources and periods covered. The analysis indicates that Scopus hosts the most important results, with 3,396 documents, followed by WoS, with 914 results, and SciELO, with 328 papers.

Concerning the time interval covered by the explorations, it is important to point out that the three bibliometric surveys cover the entire period available in their respective databases, with Scopus being the database hosting results over the longest time interval,

from 1959 to 2024. WoS computes results from 2008 to 2024. Finally, SciELO records results from 2002 to 2023.

About the sources associated with the results, 557 were found in WoS, while 2,140 were identified in Scopus. In SciELO, the sources recorded a total of 201 appearances.

The figures indicate that Scopus has the highest coverage regarding several documents, periods and sources, which could be related to its interdisciplinary and geographical breadth (Gregorio Chaviano et al., 2021). In the future, it could enable a deeper historical analysis of the development and evolution of the concept.

Table 2. Synthesis of explorations in WoS, Scopus and SciELO

Main information	in WoS	in Scopus	in SciELO
Time interval	2008 2024	1959 a 2024	2002 a 2023
Sources (magazines, books, etc.)	557	2.140	201
Documents	914	3.396	328
References	39.322	140.830	7.784
Keywords Plus (ID)	1.607	8.075	-
Author keywords	2.782	7.374	1.063
Authors	2.924	10.812	630
Types of documents			
Article	787	2.461	308
Books	-	53	-
Book chapter	-	230	-
Reviews	62	442	6
Other	65	210	14

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Annual scientific production

In all three cases, production shows a sustained increase, although with different patterns; in WoS, it is observed that from 2019, production has increased significantly, exceeding 100 publications per year. Scopus shows an earlier increase, starting in 2012 with a frequency of more than 100 articles per year, reaching a peak in 2023 with 308 publications. In the case of SciELO, although the general trend is upward, fluctuations are observed; the year 2021 records the highest number of publications with 33 results.



Figure 1. Annual scientific production in WoS

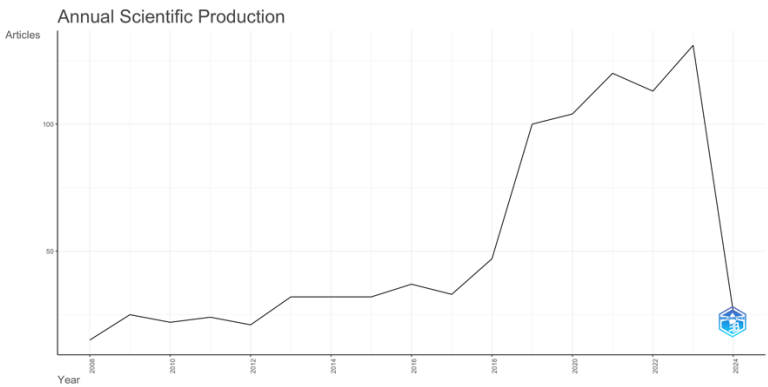


Figure 2. Scopus annual scientific production

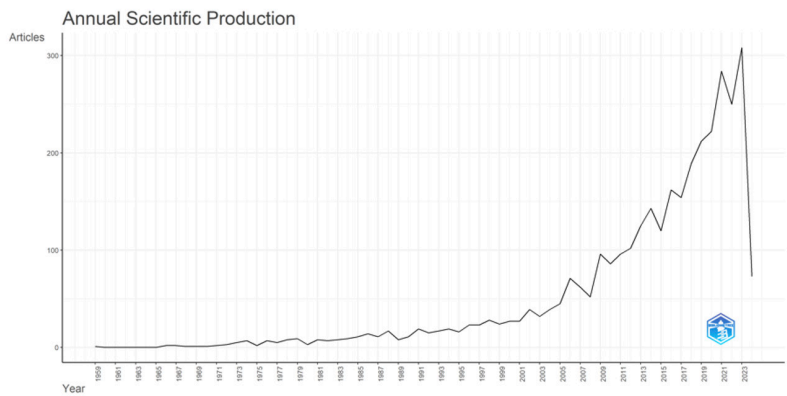
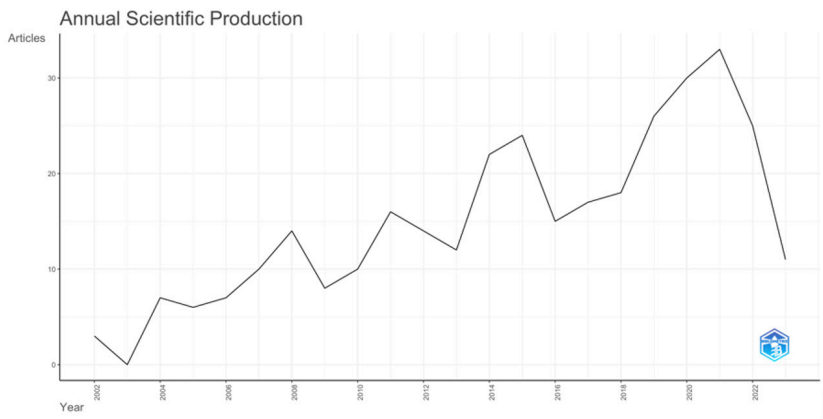


Figure 3. SciELO annual scientific production



Scientific production by language and country

The analysis of scientific production according to language reveals that the four most prevalent languages are English, Spanish, Portuguese and French, the order of which varies depending on the database consulted: English predominates in Scopus and WoS with 2,823 and 683 results, respectively, which is to be expected with the hegemony of this language in scientific communication (Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020). In SciELO, on the other hand, English-language production registers 18 results.

As for the Spanish language, the production is more balanced; 251 results are computed in Scopus, 230 publications in SciELO, and 179 results in WoS. As for the Portuguese output, a lower frequency is observed; only 26 results are found in WoS, 62 in Scopus, and the highest number is recorded in SciELO, with 79 records. Finally, the Gallic language records only results in WoS and Scopus, with 10 and 85 results, respectively.

Table 3. Publications by language in WoS, Scopus and SciELO

Languages	in WoS	in Scopus	in SciELO
English	683	2.823	18
Spanish	179	251	230
Portuguese	26	62	79
French	10	85	-
German	5	38	-
Italian	4	28	-
Afrikaans	1	-	1
Croatian	1	5	-



Table 4. Scientific production by country in WoS, Scopus and SciELO

WoS		Scopus		SciELO	
Country	Quantity	Country	Quantity	Country	Quantity
Spain	667	United States	1.649	Colombia	93
United States	457	United King- dom	1.184	Brazil	85
United King- dom	349	Spain	618	Chile	79
Australia	167	Canada	404	Argentina	35
Canada	150	Australia	397	Mexico	34
China	146	France	313	Spain	29
Portugal	120	Italy	289	Portugal	22
Chile	108	China	252	Ecuador	13

Using the nationality of the authorships as the unit of analysis, it is evident that in WoS, Spain leads the list with 667 entries, followed by the United States with 457 and the United Kingdom with 349. When the same analysis is carried out in Scopus, the order of the countries varies; the United States leads the list with 1,649 authorships, followed by the United Kingdom with 1,184, and Spain with 618, showing a considerable decrease with the previous ones.

SciELO shows a different reality to that observed in the databases linked to the global north. The countries with the most publications are Colombia, which has 93 authorships; Brazil, which has 85; and Chile, which has 79 results.

Disciplinary categories and subject areas

Analysing the disciplinary categories (in WoS and SciELO) and subject area (in Scopus), in which the papers analysed fall, yields diverse results. In the case of WoS, the discipline that is most represented is social work, with 156 documents, which suggests a strong association between the concept of social intervention and this discipline. It is followed by the disciplinary category of Occupational Environmental Public Health, with 85 publications, with Interdisciplinary Social Sciences and Psychiatry in third and fourth position, with 75 and 72 results, respectively.



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In Scopus, the dominant subject area is Medicine, with 1,453 results; Social Sciences, with 1,388; Psychology, with 661 results; and the Arts and Humanities category in fourth position with 370 publications. It should be noted that the social work category does not exist in Scopus.

In SciELO, the most represented disciplinary category is Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, with 66 results, and Educational Research and Sociology, with 37 results. The fourth position is the Multidisciplinary Humanities category, with 32 results.

Table 5 summarises the total frequency of publications by disciplinary category and subject area.

Table 5. Total frequency of publications by disciplinary category and subject area in WoS, Scopus and SciELO

WoS categories	Total	Subject area in Scopus	Total	Categories in SciELO	Total
Social work	156	Medicine	1.453	Interdisciplinary Social Sciences	66
Public Environmental Occupational Health	85	Social sciences	1.388	Education Research	37
Interdisciplinary Social Sciences	75	Psychology	661	Sociology	37
Psychiatry	72	Arts and Humanities	370	Humanities Multidisciplinary	32
Education Education Research	52	Nursing	192	Multidisciplinary Psychology	24
Multidisciplinary Psychology	47	Computing	159	Public Environmental Occupational Health	23
Sociology	29	Business, Administration and Accounting	151	Anthropology	21
Environmental Science	27	Environmental Science	118	History	20
Geriatrics Gerontology	25	Economics, Econometrics and Finance	96	Social work	18
Clinical Psychology	25	Engineering	95	Psychology	14



On analysing the set of appearances of the concept and its link with the disciplinary categories and subject areas, it stands out that, as the subject area of social work does not exist in Scopus, implications and difficulties arise for the visibility and recognition of the discipline at an international level (Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2014). In WoS and SciELO, social work is a disciplinary category. Still, disparities are evident in the results: while in WoS, the category of social work occupies first place with 156 results, representing one-sixth of the total number of papers found by the search, in SciELO, the disciplinary category of social work appears in ninth position with only 18 results.

Magazines

Most relevant journals by total frequency of publications

In WoS, the three journals with the most publications explicitly state their link to the discipline of social work. These are the journal *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, affiliated with the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain, with 28 results, followed by the *European Journal of Social Work*, affiliated with Taylor & Francis, UK, and the journal *Prospectiva*, affiliated with the *Universidad del Valle in Colombia*, both with 18 publications. Notably, five of the eight journals with the highest number of publications are explicitly linked to the discipline of social work. This reinforces the discipline's centrality in the discussions around the concept of social intervention in this database.

In Scopus, the four journals with the highest number of publications are *Plos One*, published by the *Public Library of Science (PLOS)*, USA, with 34 publications, followed by the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, published by the *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute*, Switzerland, with 26 publications. In third place, *Springer's Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* and the *European Journal of Social Work* (UK), both with 22 results. In Scopus, only two of the eight journals at the top of the list with the highest number of publications are explicitly linked to the discipline of social work, namely the *European Journal of Social Work* (UK) and the journal *Alternatives* from the University of Alicante, Spain.

In SciELO, the journals with the highest number of publications are the Colombian journal *Prospectiva*, with 18 papers, followed by *Revista Cs of the Universidad Icesi* with eight publications, and the Brazilian journal *Katálisis*, from the Federal University of Santa Catarina, with seven publications. In SciELO, of the eight journals with the highest number of publications, only three are explicitly linked to the discipline, with *Prospectiva* (Colombia), *Revista Katálisis* (Brazil), and the journal *Serviço Social & Sociedade*, published by *Cortez Editora Limitada* (Brazil).

Table 6. Journals with the highest number of publications WoS, Scopus and SciELO

in WoS	Total	in Scopus	Total	in SciELO	Total
Social Work Notebooks	28	Plos One	34	Foresight	18
European Journal of So- cial Work	18	International Journal of Environmental Re- search and Public Health	26	Cs Magazine	8
Foresight	18	Journal of Autism and Developmental Disor- ders	22	K a t á l y s i s Magazine	7
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	15	European Journal of So- cial Work	22	Psychology & Society	6
Alternatives. Social Work Notebooks	12	Social Science and Medicine	21	Psychosocial Intervention	6
Journal of Autism and Developmental Disor- ders	12	Alternatives	18	Moebio Tape	5
Social Prism	12	Bmc Public Health	17	Journal of So- cial Studies	5
Trabajo Social Glob- al-Global Social Work	12	Frontiers in Psychology	17	Social Service & Society	5

In WoS, the leading journals linked to disseminating discussions on social intervention belong to the discipline of social work. In contrast, medical and multidisciplinary journals predominate in Scopus, suggesting that other disciplines prefer talks on social intervention. In SciELO, on the other hand, journals from the social sciences and humanities appear to have a more significant presence.

Impact indices by journals

The analysis of impact indices makes it possible to quantify the influence and relevance of journals in a field. Table 7 shows the five journals with the highest impact indices according to citation indexes.



Table 7. Journals with the highest impact in h, g, and m indexes and total citations in WoS, Scopus and SciELO

in WoS	Index h	Index g	Index m	Total ap- pointments
Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders	7	12	0,438	313
European Journal of Social Work	6	9	0,4	99
Bmj Open	5	10	0,357	102
International Journal of Environmen- tal Research and Public Health	5	10	0,5	108
Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing	5	6	0,385	44
in Scopus	Index h	Index g	Index m	Total ap- pointments
Social Science and Medicine	16	21	0,4	1.518
Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders	13	22	0,464	1.355
Plos One	13	21	1,083	474
Bmc Public Health	11	17	0,579	927
British Journal of Psychiatry	10	11	0,227	1.533
in SciELO	Index h	Index g	Index m	Total ap- pointments
Moebio Tape	3	4	0,214	17
Interface - Communication, Health, Education	3	4	0,143	22
Psychosocial Intervention	3	6	0,158	41
Journal of Social Studies	3	4	0,143	20
Cadernos de Saúde Pública	2	3	0,087	10

Special attention should be paid to the predominance of publications in English, occupying the top positions in terms of impact and influence in the field, especially in databases associated with the global north. In the three bibliometric explorations, the only journal linked to the discipline of social work is the *European Journal of Social Work* (United Kingdom), which is included in the WoS index. Similarly, in dialogue with the previous results, the journals that occupy the top positions in WoS and Scopus are preferably linked to health, medicine or multidisciplinary areas, and only in SciELO do journals from the humanities or social sciences appear.



Bradford Law

The Bradford's Law formula identifies the journals in Zone 1 as central and most relevant to the concept under study; these journals occupy a prominent position in disseminating research related to social intervention. Figures 4, 5 and 6 contain the graphical representation of the law in WoS, Scopus and SciELO, respectively.

Figure 4. WoS Bradford's Law

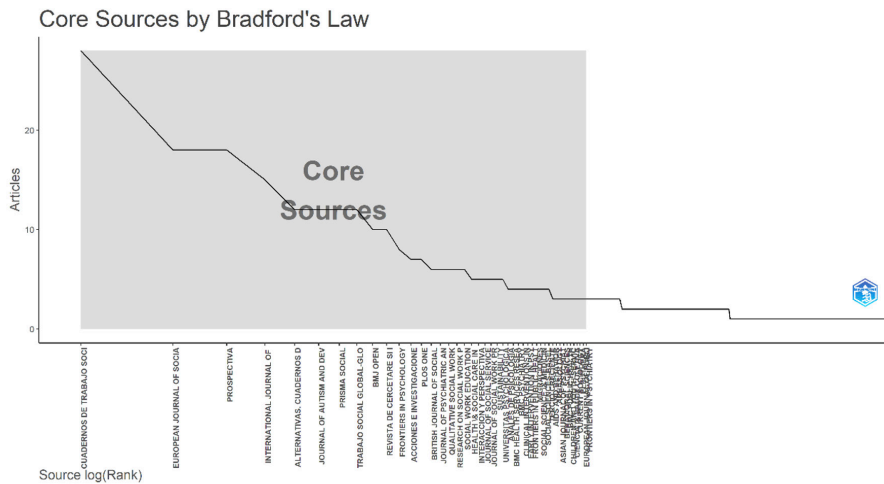


Figure 5. Scopus Bradford's Law

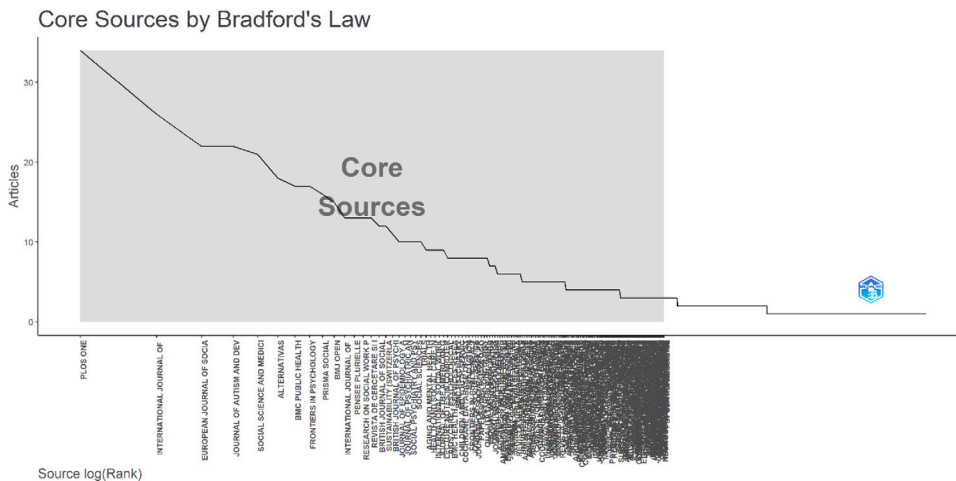
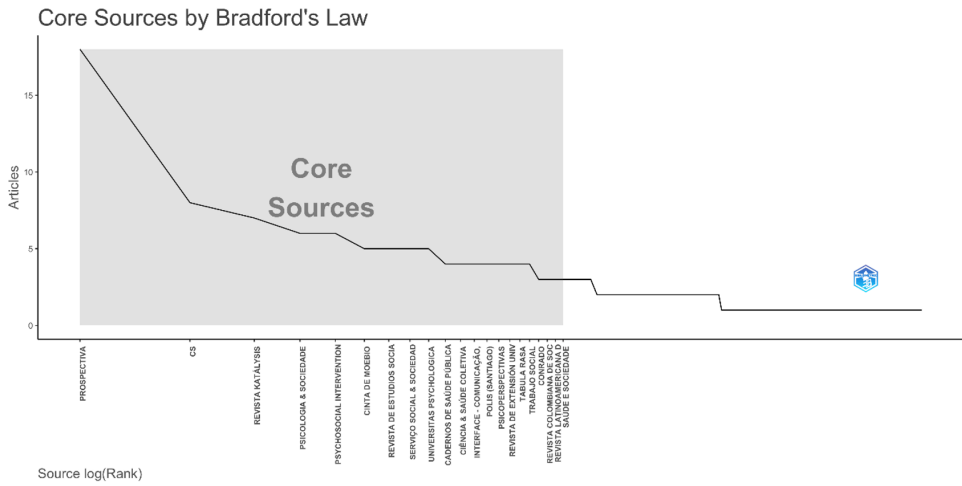


Figure 6. SciELO Bradford's Law



In WoS, of the 557 sources in which the concept of social intervention is mentioned, the analysis of Bradford's law allows us to identify a group of 45 journals grouped in Zone 1, which together publish 302 papers. The journal *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social* (Spain), with 28 entries, and the *European Journal of Social Work* (United Kingdom) and *Prospectiva* (Colombia), with 18 entries each, have the highest number of papers.

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In Scopus, the analysis of the 2,140 sources identifies 199 journals grouped in this area, which together publish 1,122 papers. In terms of frequency of publications, the following journals stand out: *Plos One* (USA), leading with 34 papers; *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (Switzerland), with 26 published papers; and the *European Journal of Social Work* (UK) and the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* (USA), both with 22 published papers.

In SciELO, of the 201 sources analysed, Bradford's law identified a group of 21 journals that together publish a total of 109 papers: the journal *Prospectiva* (Colombia) leads the panorama with 18 papers, followed by *Revista CS* (Colombia) with eight contributions, and in third place appears the journal *Katálysis* (Brazil) with seven publications.

Primary sources, according to Bradford Law

The analysis of the manifest content, derived from the review of the institutional web pages of all the sources identified by Bradford's Law as central [Zone 1] in WoS,



Scopus and SciELO, allows us to identify the journals that declare an explicit link with the discipline of social work.

WoS identifies that 15 of the 45 journals grouped in Zone 1 by Bradford’s law state that they are linked to the discipline of social work, i.e. in one out of every three sources. In Scopus, of the 199 journals identified in Zone 1, only 16 are explicitly linked to social work, translating into a ratio of one to twelve. Finally, in SciELO, of the 21 journals identified in Zone 1, only five are explicitly linked to social work, a ratio of almost one to four. This is summarised in table 8.

Table 8. Journals in Zone 1, according to Bradford, linked to social work in WoS, Scopus and SciELO

Zone 1, according to Bradford	Declares link with social work	Does not declare a link with social work	Total magazines
Zone 1 in WoS	15 (33,33%)	30 (66,66%)	45
Zone 1 in Scopus	16 (8,04%)	183 (91,96%)	199
Zone 1 in SciELO	5 (23,8%)	16 (76,2%)	21

Discussion and conclusions

The bibliometric analysis reveals the concept of social intervention in different disciplinary traditions and its multidimensional use in connection with various fields of knowledge. The comparative study of the three databases consulted shows particularities: Scopus hosts the most significant number of documents and sources and covers a more extended period. It also has the highest h, g and total citation indexes (Gregorio Chaviano et al., 2021). On the other hand, in WoS, the discussion of the concept of social intervention appears especially linked to social work.

Special attention should be paid to the findings relating to the analysis by languages and countries of publication and indexes of journals with the highest impact, which reveal a marked asymmetry in publications in English and Spanish, with a pronounced preponderance and hegemony of publications in English (Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020), reproducing hierarchies of domination, colonialities of knowledge (Quijano, 2000), and the geopolitical order of knowledge (Muñoz-Arce et al., 2021); this is most noticeable in databases associated with the global north (Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2014; Muñoz-Arce et al., 2021).



Of particular interest is the impact and influence of the sources with the highest impact indices, where it is observed that in WoS and Scopus, there are no titles in Spanish, which is not consistent with the journals with the highest number of papers. Similarly, it should be noted that the only journal that is linked to social work, and which appears in second place by impact index h in WoS, is the *European Journal of Social Work*, which denotes a disciplinary challenge located from Spanish-speaking discussions to the scientific problematisation and theorisation of knowledge on intervention, especially in Latin America, to make the definitions and relationships that give meaning to its understanding and innovation more complex (Cohen and Gómez, 2019).

The findings relating to disciplinary categories and thematic areas, as well as the analysis by total frequency of publications and the content analysis of the institutional web pages of the sources identified by Bradford's Law, reveal that in WoS, discussions of the concept of social intervention appear preferentially in social work journals; in Scopus, its discussion appears more linked to medical and multidisciplinary journals, which is explained by the non-explicit recognition of the discipline of social work in this database; In contrast, in SciELO, the discussion of the concept is found in journals linked to social sciences and humanities, which could be due to the lower presence of social work journals in this database (Muñoz-Arce et al., 2021, p.151).

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The results invite us to recognise and reaffirm that social work's disciplinary object is unfailingly social intervention (Yáñez-Pereira, 2007; Zurita-Castillo, 2012), which stands as a particular domain of knowledge (Suárez-Sánchez, 2022), as a distinctive field of professional action (Muñoz-Arce, 2019) and as the primary meaning and signifier of its identity (Saavedra, 2017). The study's findings invite us to recognise social work as the backbone discipline of social intervention. It aims to dispel the questions surrounding its disciplinary status, moving towards a more precise delimitation of the concept.

Intervention, for social work, is a fruitful object in its meaning or a non-trivial object (Morín, 2001), around which it is essential to confront the risk of its reification and deterministic simplification. We speak of an epistemological construction, always nascent in its theoretical and methodological relations (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2013) because from it, the discipline names, problematises, and produces options for transformation in the social, according to its use and reflexive appropriation as a node of knowledge.

The lines opened up by the study include the possibility of deepening quantitative approaches to the concept using spectroscopic analysis of references by year of publication (RPYS) (Bornmann and Haunschild, 2023; Thor et al., 2016; Yeung and Wong, 2019), seeking to identify the historical roots of social intervention in social work. On the other hand, the possibility emerges of fostering qualitative approaches, particularly through systematic reviews (Barquero Morales, 2022; Estarli et al., 2016) that aim to identify their places of enunciation (Karsz, 2009), from which the social interventions (Muñoz-Arce, 2018a) of the discipline are founded (Muñoz-Arce, 2018a).

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study. The results presented are independent and have not been influenced by the funding body.

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