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# Traumatic brain injury in intimate partner violence: a bibliometric analysis (2020-2025)

*Lesión cerebral traumática en violencia de pareja íntima: un análisis bibliométrico (2020-2025)*

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## Abstract

This study aims to characterize the scientific output, collaboration patterns, and thematic structure of research on traumatic brain injury (TBI) in the context of intimate partner violence (IPV), using advanced bibliometric techniques. A quantitative, descriptive, and exploratory bibliometric analysis was conducted with a retrospective, cross-sectional design, based on Web of Science and Scopus databases from 2020 to 2025. Productivity, impact, and scientific mapping indicators were employed. The results showed exponential growth in the production of 47 scientific articles ($R^2 = 0.7594$), concentrated mainly in three specialized journals that account for 76.9% of citations. The United States leads in production with 51%, followed by Australia (17%) and Canada (6.4%). Co-occurrence analysis identified four main thematic clusters focused on neuropsychological consequences, pediatric trauma, risk factors, and prevalence. It is concluded that this area of research is consolidating, although gaps remain, especially in neurobiological and longitudinal studies. Finally, the findings contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, and 10 by highlighting this underdiagnosed public health problem that particularly affects women who are victims of intimate partner violence.

**Keywords**: injury, neurobiology, violence.

## Resumen

El estudio se propone caracterizar la producción científica, los patrones de colaboración y la estructura temática de la investigación sobre lesión cerebral traumática (TBI) en contextos de violencia de pareja íntima (IPV), a través de técnicas bibliométricas avanzadas. Para ello, se realizó un análisis bibliométrico cuantitativo, descriptivo y exploratorio, con diseño retrospectivo y transversal, basado en registros de Web of Science y Scopus entre 2020 y 2025. Se emplearon indicadores de productividad, impacto y mapeo científico. Los resultados mostraron un crecimiento exponencial en la producción de 47 artículos científicos ($R^2 = 0.7594$), concentrados mayormente en tres revistas especializadas que acumulan el 76.9% de las citaciones. Estados Unidos lidera la producción con un 51%, seguido por Australia (17%) y Canadá (6.4%). El análisis de co-ocurrencia identificó cuatro clústers temáticos principales centrados en las consecuencias neuropsicológicas, el trauma pediátrico, los factores de riesgo y la prevalencia. Se concluye que esta área de investigación está en consolidación, aunque persisten vacíos especialmente en estudios neurobiológicos y longitudinales. Finalmente, los hallazgos aportan a los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible 3, 5 y 10, al visibilizar esta problemática subdiagnosticada de salud pública que afecta especialmente a mujeres víctimas de violencia de pareja.

**Palabras clave**: lesión, neurobiología, violencia.

## Introduction

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) poses one of the most significant and complex challenges in global public health, disproportionately affecting women in Latin America. This phenomenon is closely linked to the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 3 on health and well-being, Goal 5 on gender equality, and Goal 10 on reducing inequalities. These goals emphasize the urgent need to eradicate violence against women and girls, while promoting their physical, psychological, and social well-being (United Nations, 2015). The urgency of addressing the physical, psychological, and neurological consequences of IPV is critical, as this persistent issue undermines women's autonomy and overall well-being.

Although existing literature acknowledges the physical and psychological impacts of IPV, there remains a significant gap in understanding and addressing its neurological effects, particularly concerning Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs), which are among the most serious and systematically underdiagnosed consequences in the context of violence (Kwako et al., 2011). Studies indicate that between 30% and 92% of women who experience intimate partner violence have suffered at least one traumatic brain injury (Monahan & O'Leary, 1999), significantly exceeding the prevalence observed in the general population (Valera et al., 2022). However, the lack of standardized screening protocols, underdiagnosis by healthcare professionals, and fragmentation among disciplines—such as medicine, psychology, and public health—hinder a comprehensive understanding of the issue (Smirl et al., 2019; Haag et al., 2022). This gap demonstrates the absence of a systematic synthesis that reflects the evolution, trends, and conceptual structure of research on TBIs in the context of intimate partner violence.

Addressing TBI in IPV is crucial due to its profound implications for the neurological, cognitive, and emotional health of women. Repeated assaults, such as blows to the head, strangulation, and blunt force trauma, can result in cumulative brain damage, manifesting as deficits in executive functions, memory, and emotional regulation (Kwako et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2018; Daugherty et al., 2022). Nevertheless, clinical recognition remains limited due to the lack of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate neuroscience and gender-based violence studies. Understanding this intersection is vital for improving diagnosis and treatment, and for designing evidence-based policies that support the SDG agenda on health, safety, and equality for women.

This study adopts a neuropsychosocial model of trauma, integrating Baddeley's (2012) cognitive neuropsychology and Bandura's (1986) social learning theory. This theoretical perspective posits that traumatic experiences and contextual stressors influence brain plasticity, self-regulation, and memory processes, allowing for a multidimensional understanding of how TBIs associated with intimate partner violence affect the cognitive and emotional functioning of survivors. Moreover, it situates neurological injury within a biopsychosocial framework, explaining the interaction between neurobiological vulnerability, psychological adaptation, and social contexts.

Recent neuroimaging studies have provided insights into the neurobiological mechanisms involved in TBIs among survivors of intimate partner violence. Research employing structural magnetic resonance imaging reports volumetric reductions in the hippocampus, dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, and amygdala (Ansell et al., 2012; Valera & Kucyi, 2017). Functional magnetic resonance imaging analyses further reveal alterations in neural networks responsible for emotional regulation and executive control (Gilmore et al., 2016). Concurrently, serum biomarkers—such as phosphorylated tau protein, neurofilament light chain (NfL), and glial fibrillary acidic protein (GFAP)—are emerging as promising diagnostic indicators, even in the absence of loss of consciousness (Zetterberg & Blennow, 2016; Esopenko et al., 2024).

Despite these advancements, the literature remains fragmented across various disciplines—neurology, psychiatry, psychology, public health, and social work—and there is yet to be a quantitative synthesis that examines the intellectual structure of the field or identifies emerging thematic groups. In Latin America, scientific output addressing the intersection of intimate partner violence and traumatic brain injuries is limited, reflecting structural inequalities in funding, institutional collaboration, and the development of public policies. Culturally and historically, IPV in the region is mediated by gender norms, socioeconomic disparities, and access limitations to specialized health services, exacerbating the invisibility of neurological consequences among survivors.

Thus, it is essential to address this deficit from both local and global perspectives to inform equitable and contextually relevant health interventions. This study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of TBIs in IPV contexts to: (a) quantify and analyze the evolution of scientific production, (b) identify prominent authors, institutions, and countries, (c) map the thematic structure through co-occurrence analysis, (d) detect trends and knowledge gaps, and (e) offer evidence-based recommendations to guide future research. The results aim to contribute to the SDGs by supporting the development of policies, clinical protocols, and prevention strategies that protect the neurological health of women victims of gender-based violence.

## Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on a quantitative approach that employs bibliometric techniques to systematically synthesize scientific information. Its scope is descriptive, aiming to characterize, analyze, and represent trends, collaboration patterns, productivity indicators, impact metrics, and thematic structures within the

scientific literature on traumatic brain injury (TBI) in contexts of intimate partner violence (IPV). Additionally, it incorporates an exploratory component due to the limited prior bibliometric systematization in this field, enabling documentation of the current state and revealing unexplored areas that can guide future research. The design is retrospective and cross-sectional, grounded in previously published documents within a defined temporal framework.

The study population comprises peer-reviewed scientific articles addressing TBI in women survivors of intimate partner violence, particularly those that explore neurobiological or neuropsychological evidence. The search was conducted systematically in the Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus databases, recognized for including high-impact indexed journals.

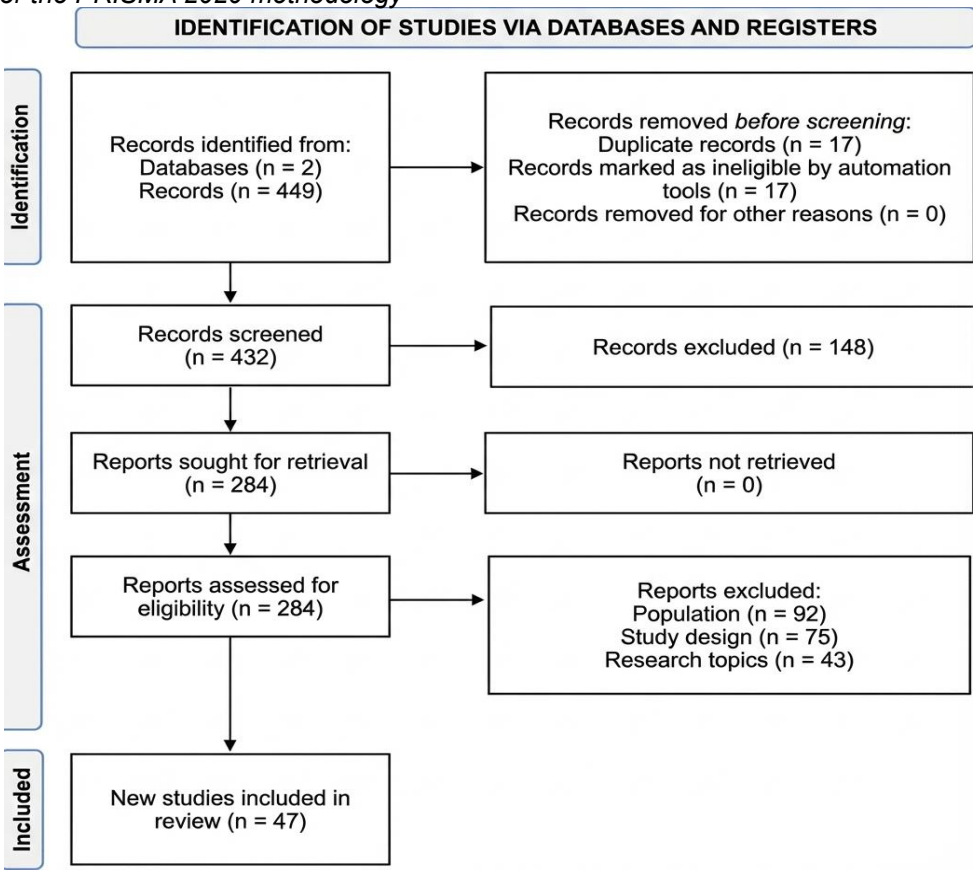
The search strategy combined three groups of key terms: "traumatic brain injury," "intimate partner violence," and "neurobiological evidence," using Boolean operators (AND/OR) and encompassing publications from 2020 to 2025. No linguistic restrictions were applied, although articles with full text available were prioritized.

Inclusion criteria focused on research regarding TBI in intimate partner violence with objective neurobiological evidence, involving adult female populations, published in journals classified in Q1 or Q2, and employing observational, experimental, or mixed designs that utilized neuroimaging, biomarkers, or standardized neuropsychological assessments. Studies involving animal models, opinion articles without original data, research on pediatric populations, publications without full text, those outside the temporal range, or lacking a measurable neurobiological component were excluded.

The methodological process strictly followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021), ensuring transparency, reproducibility, and rigor in the identification, selection, and bibliographic synthesis. The stages included identifying records in databases, applying filters by document type and relevance, selecting based on titles and abstracts according to eligibility criteria, and assessing eligibility through full-text review, documenting reasons for exclusion and final inclusion (Campbell et al., 2018; Kwako et al., 2011).

**Figure 1**

*Flow diagram for the PRISMA 2020 methodology*




**Source.** Adapted from Page et al. (2021)

Data extraction was standardized using templates designed in accordance with the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions. Data processing and bibliometric analysis were conducted utilizing the Bibliometrix package in R Studio. This software facilitated the systematic organization of references, automatic removal of duplicates, and quantitative analysis through key bibliometric indicators, such as:

- **Productivity:** Number of publications, growth rate, distribution by authors, institutions, and countries.
- **Impact:** Total citations, h-index, g-index, and m-index.
- **Collaboration:** Co-authorship networks and institutional associations.
- **Thematic structure:** Co-occurrence of keywords, conceptual mapping, and thematic evolution.

Results were presented in tables and visual representations illustrating both scientific production and the intellectual structure of the field.

In terms of ethics, the research adhered to principles of scientific integrity and transparency. As a document-based study, it was based exclusively on secondary data from indexed and publicly accessible sources. Under this approach, no human participants were involved, and no personal data were utilized. Furthermore, proper citation and acknowledgment of authorship were ensured, respecting intellectual property and academic honesty.

However, certain methodological limitations should be noted. The research focused on Scopus and Web of Science databases, which may have excluded relevant publications present in other repositories. Additionally, metrics such as citation counts and quartile rankings are dynamic and may vary over time, introducing a potential temporal bias. Despite these limitations, the methodological rigor and use of standardized bibliometric procedures ensure the reliability and reproducibility of the results.

## Results and discussion

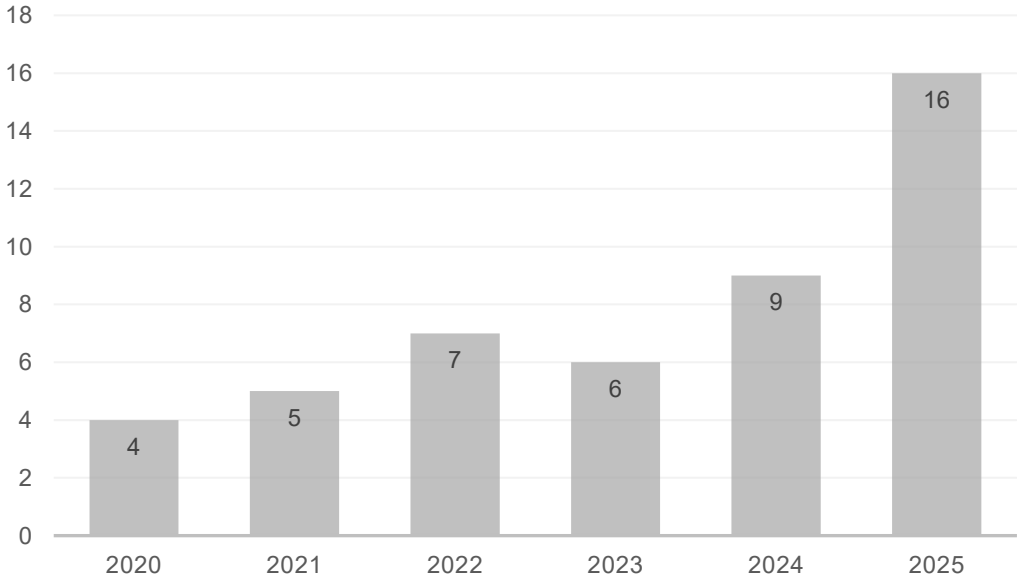
The results indicate that the systematic search initially identified 449 records (201 in Web of Science and 248 in Scopus). Of these, 17 duplicates were removed, 148 were discarded after reviewing titles and abstracts, and 210 did not meet the eligibility criteria, leaving a total of 47 scientific articles for bibliometric analysis.

Longitudinal analysis (2020-2025) revealed sustained growth in scientific production. The positive linear trend of publications ($y = 4094.9524 + 2.0286x$; $R^2 = 0.7594$) demonstrates a gradual annual increase, reaching a peak of 16 articles in 2025 compared to modest volumes in 2020-2021. This pattern of exponential growth suggests the consolidation of the field as a priority area of research interest.

Citation behavior displayed greater volatility. Although the linear trend indicates an overall decline ($y = -8.74x - 1777.76$; $R^2 = 0.2287$), the positive exponential model ($y = 0.0000e^{0.2407x}$; $R^2 = 0.8697$) better captures the impact dynamics, with notable peaks in 2022 (>90 citations). This irregularity is characteristic of emerging fields where scientific recognition depends on factors such as institutional visibility and the establishment of academic networks (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Cobo et al., 2011; Donthu et al., 2021).

In summary, these results demonstrate the evolution and increasing impact of scientific production related to traumatic brain injury in contexts of intimate partner violence, reflecting the consolidation and dynamism of this emerging area of study.

**Figure 1**
*Scientific production and temporal evolution*




**Source.** Authors' own elaboration (2025), based on data from Scopus and Web of Science

**Most productive and influential authors**

The authorship analysis revealed a moderate concentration of productivity within a small group of researchers (Table 1). Daugherty J. (2022) and Currao A. (2021) stand out as the most influential authors, with 32 and 24 citations, respectively, although their production is limited to 2-3 publications. Esopenko C. (2024) and Chiou K. (2023) show similar levels of productivity, but with an impact that is still emerging, suggesting they are becoming new references in the field.

The scientometric indicators support this hierarchy: the h-index, which combines productivity and impact, and the g-index, which weighs highly cited publications, identify established authors. Meanwhile, the m-index, which measures the rate of impact accumulation, points to emerging researchers with rapidly growing trajectories. This structure reflects a field in the process of maturation, featuring established leaders and new generations of researchers actively entering the arena.

**Table 1**
*Most relevant authors*

| Author | Most Cited Year | No. of Publications | Citations | h-index | g-index | m-index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daugherty J. | 2022 | 3 | 32 | 4 | 5 | 1.2 |
| Currao A. | 2021 | 2 | 24 | 3 | 4 | 1.0 |
| Esopenko C. | 2024 | 2 | 18 | 2 | 3 | 0.8 |
| Chiou K. | 2023 | 2 | 15 | 2 | 3 | 0.7 |

**Source.** Authors' own elaboration (2025), based on data from Scopus and Web of Science

**Most productive journals and their impact**

Scientific production was concentrated in a small core of specialized journals. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* led with 11 articles (23.4% of the total), followed by *Journal of Family Violence* with 7 articles (14.9%). These two journals are the main channels for disseminating knowledge in the field (Table 2).

**Table 2**
*Journals with the highest scientific production on the topic*

| Journal | No. of Articles | % of Total | Quartile (SJR) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* | 11 | 23.4 | Q1 |
| *Journal of Family Violence* | 7 | 14.9 | Q2 |
| *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy* | 5 | 10.6 | Q1 |
| *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* | 3 | 6.4 | Q1 |

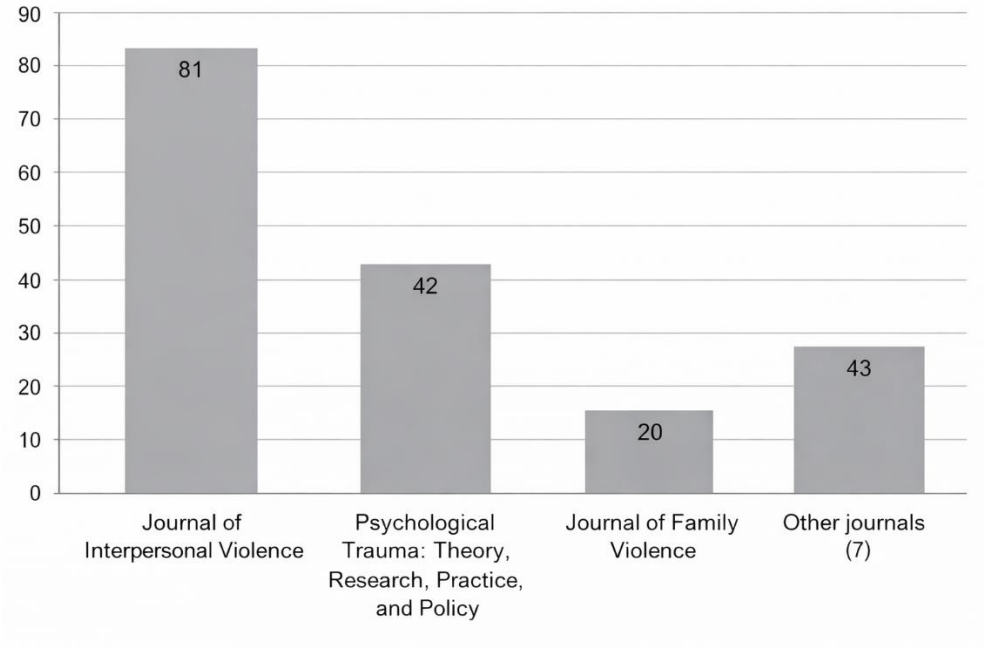
**Source.** Authors' own elaboration (2025)

**Journals with the most citations**

The citation analysis revealed an even more concentrated distribution. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* accumulated 81 citations, representing 43.5% of the total of 186 citations, consolidating its position as the most influential source in the field. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* obtained 42 citations (22.6%), followed by the *Journal of Family Violence* with 20 citations (10.8%). Together, these three journals accounted for 76.9% of the total citations, demonstrating their role as primary references for the scientific community (Table 2).

The remaining seven journals (*Behavioral Sciences, Assessment, Asian Journal of Psychiatry, Brain Behavior and Immunity, Child Abuse and Neglect, Brain Injury, and Brain Impairment*) accumulated only 43 citations, equivalent to 23.1%, with an average of 6.14 citations per journal. This asymmetry indicates that the academic discourse is concentrated in publications specializing in interpersonal violence and psychological trauma, reflecting both the maturity of the field and the consolidation of these journals as legitimate spaces for scientific production.

**Figure 2**
*Journals with the most citations*




**Source.** Authors' own elaboration (2025)

**Distribution of journals according to Bradford's Law**

The analysis according to Bradford's Law (Bradford, 1934) confirmed a classic dispersion structure in three zones of productivity (Table 3):

- **Zone 1 (core):** 2 journals (8% of the total) concentrated 38.3% of the articles, demonstrating their centrality as reference sources.
- **Zone 2 (intermediate)**: 8 journals (32%) contributed 29.8% of the scientific production.
- **Zone 3 (peripheral)**: 15 journals (60%) contributed only 31.9% of the documents.

This distribution confirms Bradford's principle: a small group of journals concentrates most of the relevant literature, while productivity decreases progressively in outer zones. This pattern facilitates the identification of the primary sources that researchers should systematically monitor to stay updated in the field.

**Table 3**
*Distribution patterns of articles in scientific journals (Bradford's Law)*

| Zone | No. of Journals | % of Total | % of Articles | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Zone 1 (core)** | 2 | 8 | 38.3 | Journals with the highest impact and constant citation |
| **Zone 2 (intermediate)** | 8 | 32 | 29.8 | Specialized publications with moderate production |
| **Zone 3 (peripheral)** | 15 | 60 | 31.9 | Journals with low publication frequency on the topic |

**Source.** Authors' own elaboration (2025), adapted from Bradford (1934)

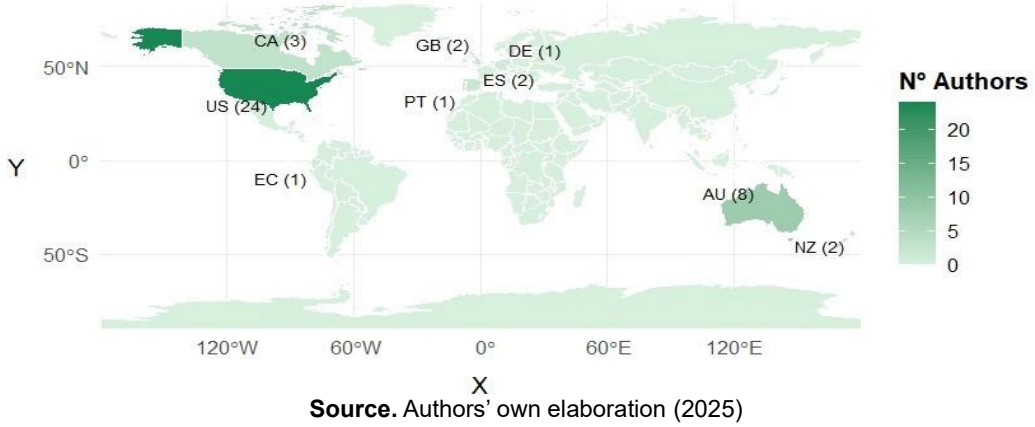
**Scientific production by country (first affiliation)**

The analysis of institutional affiliations revealed a marked geographical concentration of research (Figure 4). The United States led with 24 documents (51.1% of the total), followed by Australia with 8 publications (17.0%) and Canada with 3 (6.4%). These three countries form the core of scientific productivity, reflecting their consolidated research infrastructure and academic tradition in the field.

In contrast, European production showed moderate dispersion: Spain (2 documents), United Kingdom (2), Germany (1), and Portugal (1), totaling only 12.8% of the publications. Ecuador and New Zealand contributed with 1 and 2 documents, respectively, demonstrating the limited participation of middle- and low-income countries in this line of research.

This unequal distribution is consistent with previous bibliometric studies that document the concentration of global scientific leadership in countries with greater investment in R&D, advanced technological infrastructure, and a critical mass of specialized researchers (Carrión-Mero et al., 2021; Montalván-Burbano et al., 2021). The limited Latin American representation—despite the high regional prevalence of IPV—underscores a critical gap between the magnitude of the public health problem and the installed research capacity to address it.

**Figure 3**
*Geographic distribution of scientific production (first affiliation)*




**Source.** Authors' own elaboration (2025)

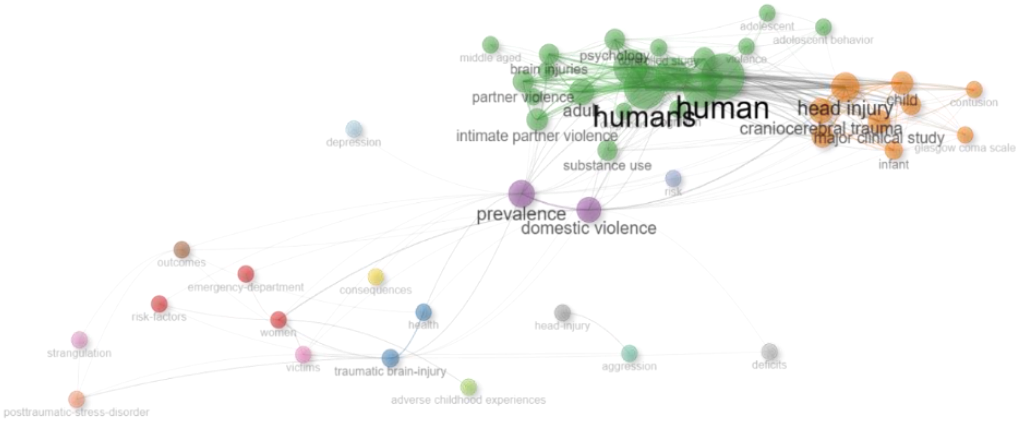
**Co-occurrence network**

The co-occurrence network analysis reveals four main thematic clusters in the research on trauma and violence. The green cluster, the most prominent, groups terms related to interpersonal violence (intimate partner violence, domestic violence), brain injuries, and adolescent populations, highlighting the connection between intimate partner violence and neuropsychological consequences. The orange cluster focuses on pediatric clinical terminology (head injury, craniocerebral trauma, child, infant), specifically addressing childhood traumatic brain injuries. The red cluster includes risk factors (women, victims, risk factors) and consequences such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), while the purple cluster emphasizes the prevalence of domestic violence.

Central nodes like "human" and "adult" act as connectors between clusters, with terms such as "depression" and "traumatic brain injury" serving as conceptual bridges. This structure indicates that research has developed an integrated understanding that converges clinical, epidemiological, and psychosocial perspectives to address interpersonal violence and its mental health sequelae (Toccalino et al., 2024).

**Figure 4**

*Semantic network of keywords*




**Source.** Authors' own elaboration (2025), using Bibliometrix

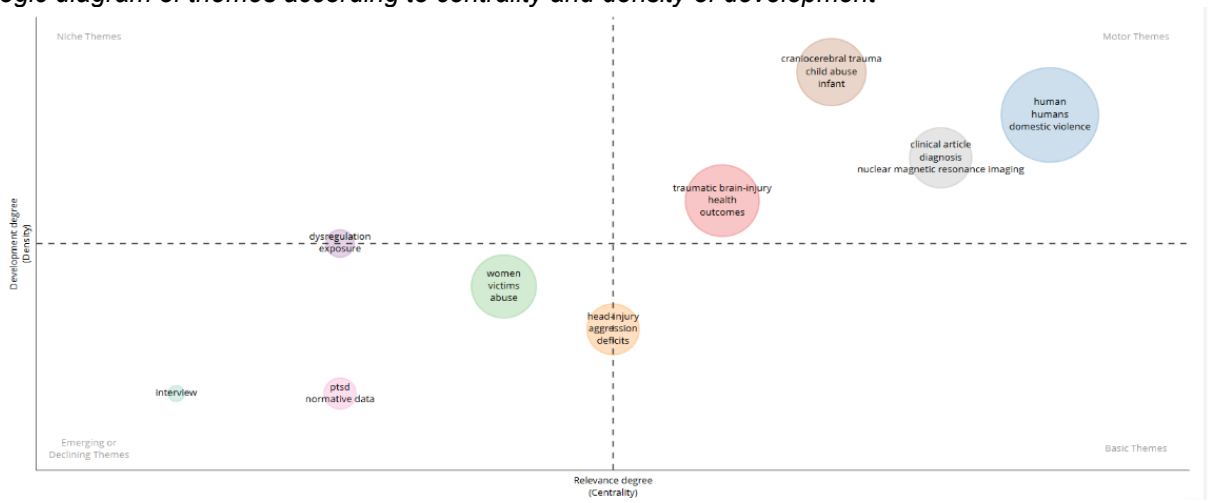
**Thematic strategic diagram**

The thematic map presents a bibliometric analysis of research on traumatic brain injuries and violence, organized into four quadrants based on their centrality (relevance) and density (degree of development). The driving themes, located in the upper right quadrant, include craniocerebral trauma, child abuse infant, domestic violence, and traumatic brain injury health outcomes, indicating that these are highly developed and central areas within the field of study. Basic themes, situated in the lower right quadrant, such as women victims abuse and head-injury aggression deficits, show high centrality but lower internal development, suggesting that they are broad but require further exploration.

Emerging or declining themes such as dysregulation exposure, PTSD, and interview appear in the lower left quadrant, characterized by low centrality and development, while the upper left quadrant lacks clearly defined niche topics. This pattern suggests that research predominantly focuses on clinical and diagnostic aspects of traumatic brain injury associated with interpersonal violence, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and infants, leaving less explored areas related to psychological and methodological aspects.

**Figure 5**

*Strategic diagram of themes according to centrality and density of development*




**Source.** Authors' own elaboration (2025), based on Cobo et al. (2011)

The strategic diagram (Figure 6) classifies research topics based on two key dimensions: centrality, which measures the relevance of a topic within the field, and density, which indicates the degree of internal development of the topic (Callon et al., 1991; Cobo et al., 2011). This allows for observing the differential maturity of various research lines.

In the upper right quadrant, the driving topics include craniocerebral trauma, child abuse infant, human/humans/domestic violence, clinical article diagnosis/nuclear magnetic resonance imaging, and traumatic brain injury health outcomes. These represent consolidated, highly developed, and central areas that drive the advancement of the field. Conversely, the lower right quadrant groups basic topics such as women victims abuse and head-injury aggression deficits. While these topics have high cross-sectional relevance, their internal development is limited, indicating the need for deeper theoretical and empirical exploration.

In the lower left quadrant, emerging or declining topics such as dysregulation exposure, PTSD, interview, and normative data are characterized by low centrality and density. This suggests that these lines are either still nascent or have lost research momentum (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). Notably, the upper left quadrant, which would correspond to very developed but peripheral niche topics, remains virtually empty.

This pattern evidences that research primarily concentrates on clinical and diagnostic aspects of traumatic brain injury associated with intimate partner violence, especially among vulnerable populations, while psychological and methodological areas are relatively unexplored, representing significant opportunities to diversify research topics (Börner et al., 2003).

In summary, this study provides a novel bibliometric insight into traumatic brain injury in contexts of intimate partner violence, integrating neurobiological, psychological, and social perspectives. Its scientific value lies in revealing emerging trends and knowledge gaps that limit a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Consequently, it opens new theoretical pathways from a gender perspective and, from a practical standpoint, guides the formulation of clinical neurocognitive screening protocols and public policies aimed at supporting women survivors of intimate partner violence.

## Conclusions

This bibliometric analysis demonstrates that research on traumatic brain injuries in contexts of intimate partner violence is a rapidly consolidating field, characterized by exponential growth in scientific productivity, with a predominant institutional concentration in high-income countries and a thematic structure organized around four main domains: neuropsychological consequences, pediatric trauma, risk factors, and epidemiology.

Moreover, critical gaps were identified in key areas such as diagnostic biomarkers, longitudinal studies, geographical diversity, and translational research, which outline a priority agenda for the next decade. The progressive integration of neurobiological, clinical, and psychosocial perspectives reflects a growing maturity within the field, although subdeveloped thematic areas still require specific attention.

These findings provide essential empirical evidence to guide funding policies for scientific research, prioritize investigative lines, foster international collaborations, and develop evidence-based clinical protocols. Ultimately, all these efforts will contribute effectively to the Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, and 10. The quantitative visualization of this currently underdiagnosed public health issue represents a key advancement toward achieving equity in neurological health for women survivors of gender-based violence.

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