

Incest in Social Work: A Bibliometric Analysis of Global Research Trends (1980–2023)

Sosyal Hizmet Alanında Encest: Küresel Araştırma Eğilimlerinin Bibliyometrik Analizi (1980–2023)

ABSTRACT

This study explores the academic visibility of incest within the field of social work through a bibliometric analysis of 87 original research articles published between 1980 and 2023 in the Web of Science database using the keywords “incest” and “social work.” Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Finkelhor’s child abuse typologies and Herman’s trauma theory, the study conceptualizes incest as not only an individual trauma but also a structural and culturally embedded issue. Keyword frequency, co-citation networks, and thematic mapping reveal that “child sexual abuse,” “sibling incest,” “shame,” “guilt,” and “disclosure” are dominant yet unevenly distributed concepts. Notably, “disclosure” emerges as a transitional yet central theme, underscoring the psychological and institutional barriers to speaking out. Academic production is largely concentrated in the United States and other Western countries, whereas countries with strong patriarchal structures and cultural taboos are underrepresented in the literature. The findings point to the need for culturally sensitive, theoretically grounded, and interdisciplinary interventions in social work practice. This study contributes a conceptual roadmap to advance future research, address systemic silence, and strengthen trauma-informed and survivor-centered responses to incest within both academic and applied social work settings.

Keywords: Incest, Bibliometric Analysis, Sibling Sexual Abuse, Disclosure, Shame

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, sosyal hizmet disiplini içerisinde encest konusunun akademik görünürlüğünü, Web of Science veri tabanında “incest” ve “social work” anahtar kelimeleriyle 1980–2023 yılları arasında yayımlanmış 87 özgün araştırma makalesi üzerinden yapılan bibliyometrik bir analizle incelemektedir. Finkelhor’un çocuk istismarı tiplendirmeleri ve Herman’ın travma kuramı gibi kuramsal çerçevelere dayanan çalışmada, encest yalnızca bireysel bir travma olarak değil, aynı zamanda yapısal ve kültürel olarak kökleşmiş bir sorun olarak ele alınmaktadır. Anahtar kelime sıklığı, eş-atıf ağları ve tematik haritalama bulguları, “çocuk cinsel istismarı”, “kardeşler arası encest”, “utanç”, “suçluluk” ve “ifşa” kavramlarının literatürde baskın ancak dengesiz şekilde dağıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle “ifşa” teması geçişsel bir kavram olarak öne çıkmakta; bu durum, konuşmanın önündeki psikolojik ve kurumsal engellere işaret etmektedir. Akademik üretimin büyük ölçüde Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve diğer Batı ülkelerinde yoğunlaştığı, buna karşın ataerkil yapının ve kültürel tabuların güçlü olduğu ülkelerin literatürde yeterince temsil edilmediği görülmektedir. Bulgular, sosyal hizmet uygulamalarında kültürel açıdan duyarlı, kuramsal temelli ve disiplinlerarası müdahalelere duyulan ihtiyacı ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, gelecekteki araştırmalara kavramsal bir yol haritası sunarak sistemik sessizliği sorgulamayı, travma odaklı ve mağdur merkezli sosyal hizmet yaklaşımlarını güçlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Encest, Bibliyometrik Analiz, Kardeşler Arası Cinsel İstismar, Ifşa, Utanç

INTRODUCTION

Incest represents one of the most severe, destructive, and complex forms of child sexual abuse (Bianciardi et al., 2024; Green, 2019). Despite strong legal frameworks and deeply rooted social taboos, it continues to occur across various contexts and geographies worldwide (Shaked et al., 2021; Quarshie et al., 2017). Morrill (2014) states that the incidence of incest has shown a global increase since the 1980s. Incest is a form of child sexual abuse that occurs within the family, where the child expects care, protection, and affection typically perpetrated by someone older or in a position of power.

Child sexual abuse encompasses any behavior where an adult or older child uses a minor for sexual gratification, including touching, exhibitionism, exposure to pornographic material, or sexual penetration (Finkelhor, 1984; Giardino et al., 1992). According to UNICEF (2020), one in ten children globally approximately 120 million experiences sexual abuse before the age of 20. While girls are statistically more frequently reported as victims, Finkelhor et al. (1986) emphasize that this may result from insufficient attention to boys who are also at significant

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risk. Girls are more likely to be abused by family members, whereas boys are often victimized by individuals in positions of authority.

Studies have demonstrated a significant correlation between incest and socioeconomic vulnerability, particularly in families living in poverty, overcrowded housing, or at risk of social exclusion (Lambert & Andipatin, 2014; Orak, Bayrak & Emirza, 2023). Inadequate living conditions, lack of privacy, constant stress, and blurred family roles contribute to the normalization of unhealthy dynamics and hinder the interruption of cycles of conflict, neglect, and violence (Munir & Sultana, 2023). Beyond physical and psychological trauma, incest profoundly disrupts a child's sense of trust, bodily integrity, social functioning, and identity development (Courtois, 2024; WHO, 2024).

There is no fixed developmental stage at which incest begins; it can occur during infancy, early childhood, or adolescence. It frequently starts when the child lacks the verbal or cognitive capacity to comprehend or disclose the abuse. According to Kennedy et al. (1990), incest may involve a single abuser on multiple occasions, multiple perpetrators targeting the same victim, or a single perpetrator abusing multiple family members. This type of abuse, rooted in fear and silence (DePrince et al., 2012), may significantly impair the child's personality development and have long-lasting effects (Fraenkel, 2019; Herman, 2015). When the perpetrator is a family member and others ignore or enable the abuse, the child may lose their fundamental belief in a safe world (Lev-Wiesel, 2015).

Victims of incest often experience a range of psychosocial difficulties, including relationship problems, attachment issues, feelings of insecurity and worthlessness, guilt, shame, low self-esteem, introversion, fear, anger, hostility, risky sexual behavior, sexual dysfunction, sleep disturbances, concentration difficulties, academic failure, and suicidal ideation (Freeman & Morris, 2001; Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). Symptoms may also include enuresis, encopresis, self-harm, substance use, psychogenic reactions, and, in some cases, genital abnormalities or infections. Adolescents may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, and dissociative amnesia (Aktepe & Kocaman, 2013), as well as psychotic episodes, schizophrenia, or personality disorders (Ferguson et al., 2008; Gur, 2019; Bendall et al., 2011; Cutajar et al., 2010).

Incest is often characterized as a form of "silent violence" due to its unspeakable nature in many cultures. Cultural silence can prevent victims from disclosing the abuse due to societal and familial pressures (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987; Easton, 2013). In the most devastating form father-daughter incest the perpetrator's absolute authority within the family and the child's emotional dependency maintain the secrecy and continuity of abuse. In such cases, victims may misinterpret the abuse as affection and internalize feelings of guilt and shame. Shame, in this context, transcends the individual and operates as a social mechanism of control. While guilt triggers fear of disbelief and rejection upon disclosure, shame leads to alienation from the body and self. As Scheff (2006) argues, shame is inherently relational and associated with social disconnection.

The "unspeakability" of incest is not only personal but also structural, embedded in patriarchal norms that prioritize family honor and privacy, thereby silencing the victim and protecting the perpetrator (Çetinkaya, 2013). Blume (1990) suggests that perpetrators often exercise power over their victims, manipulating the child's emotional and psychological dependence. Girls, in particular, may internalize blame and feel shame for their own bodies, thus maintaining silence (Finkelhor et al., 1986; Kennedy & Prock, 2018). Sibling sexual abuse may also be downplayed or mischaracterized as childhood curiosity, despite the severe trauma and shame it causes (McVeigh, 2003; Cyr et al., 2002).

Incest affects the entire family system. Families may feel shame because of the perpetrator, become defensive or even accuse the child, or deny the abuse altogether (Bulut et al., 2024). In many cases, families suppress or minimize the issue, while victims often refrain from disclosure due to fear of family breakdown or continued cohabitation with the perpetrator.

Children exposed to incest require child-centered social work interventions. Social work not only supports individual recovery but also contributes to raising public awareness, strengthening child protection systems, and building supportive relationships that break the silence. Hence, social work education should equip professionals with the skills to identify and respond to signs of sexual abuse (Kewley et al., 2025). Social workers are professionals who build therapeutic alliances with children, assess family functioning, identify risk factors, work in interdisciplinary teams, and develop culturally sensitive intervention plans. Approaches such as systems theory, ecological perspective, feminist theory, and social learning theory provide a multidimensional framework for responding to incest (Thorman, 1983; Kara et al., 2004). Research on incest supports efforts to protect vulnerable populations, promote family health, and strengthen social institutions (WHO, 2024).

From this perspective, the present study is considered significant due to its potential contributions to child and family well-being. This study not only aims to present a bibliometric mapping but also seeks to explore how the

concept of incest has been conceptualized in the social work literature, how this conceptualization has evolved over time, and how interdisciplinary interactions have shaped this evolution.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the volume, yearly distribution, and publication trends of scientific literature on “incest” and “social work” from 1980 to 2023.
2. To identify the most influential authors, countries, and journals contributing to the topic.
3. To analyze the conceptual structure and thematic development (motor, emerging, niche, and declining themes) based on Author Keywords.
4. To determine the key studies and theoretical foundations through citation and co-citation analysis.
5. To examine the temporal contributions and collaborations of authors using Three-Field Plot and Authors’ Production Over Time.
6. To map institutional and national collaboration networks and evaluate the geographical and cultural distribution of research.
7. To explore the thematic dimensions through which incest is addressed in social work literature (e.g., disclosure, guilt, shame, psychosocial impact) and identify research gaps.

Design

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of scholarly publications addressing incest within the field of social work. The methodological framework for the analysis is based on the bibliometric guidelines proposed by Donthu et al. (2021). Bibliometric analysis serves as a systematic approach to mapping the intellectual structure of a field and identifying patterns of scientific productivity (Rialti et al., 2019).

Sampling

This study analyzed a total of 87 scholarly articles ($N = 87$) on incest published within the field of social work. The inclusion criteria consisted of research articles published in English between 1980 and 2023. Publications that did not meet these criteria, including books, book chapters, data papers, conference abstracts, proceedings, review articles, non-English publications, and early access articles, were excluded from the analysis.

Data Collection

This study is a cross-sectional analysis designed to examine the bibliography of publications related to the issue of incest within the field of social work up to the year 2023. The research methodology of this article was developed using two main steps. First, the Web of Science (WoS) database was selected as the bibliographic source. A search query was conducted using the terms “incest” and “social work” through the topic category in the WoS database. As of May 13, 2025, a total of 316 publications were initially identified. Among these, research articles published in English between 1980 and 2023 and classified under the “Social Work” category were included in the analysis. Based on these criteria, 87 articles were identified. These 87 records were downloaded from the WoS database using the “Export” function as a full record with cited references in TXT file format. The downloaded data included information such as topic category, authors’ names, article titles, journal names, keywords, institutional affiliations, publication years, citation counts, and abstracts. To analyze the collected data, the R-package software was used. The R-package was developed by Aria and Cuccurullo and is written in the R programming language (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). It contains core algorithms for performing statistical and science mapping analyses. Recent versions of Bibliometrix (version 2.0 and above) include a web-based interface called Biblioshiny, which is designed to help users conduct bibliometric analysis without requiring coding skills. Biblioshiny allows for the import of data files in TXT, BibTeX, CSV, or plain text formats from Web of Science databases. In this study, the downloaded TXT files were merged and uploaded into the Biblioshiny interface via RStudio, and a filtering process was applied to conduct the final analysis of the 87 articles.

A thematic map based on the 250 most frequent Author Keywords was generated using Biblioshiny, with a minimum cluster frequency of 5 per thousand documents. Themes were categorized as motor, basic, niche, or emerging/declining based on their centrality and density, providing a structured overview of the field’s conceptual landscape.

A co-occurrence network of Author Keywords was generated using Biblioshiny, with 50 nodes and a minimum edge threshold of 2. The Louvain algorithm and association normalization were applied, and isolated nodes were removed to improve clarity.

A document co-citation network was generated using Biblioshiny to explore the field's intellectual structure. All 87 documents were included with a co-citation threshold of 2. The Louvain algorithm and automatic layout were applied, with a repulsion force of 0.1 and isolated nodes removed for visual clarity.

To visualize the conceptual focus of the selected studies, a word cloud was generated based on Author Keywords using the Biblioshiny interface. The analysis included the 100 most frequently used keywords, providing a graphical representation of thematic density across the corpus.

An author co-citation network was generated using Biblioshiny to examine intellectual linkages among the 141 authors identified in the dataset. The Louvain algorithm and automatic layout were applied, with a co-citation threshold of 2, a repulsion force of 0.1, and isolated nodes removed to enhance visualization. This network revealed key authors and thematic communities in the field.

A co-authorship network was generated using Biblioshiny to examine collaboration patterns among authors and to uncover the structural dynamics of scholarly interaction within the field. Co-authorship analysis is a widely used bibliometric method for mapping scientific collaboration and identifying influential researchers and research communities. The analysis was based on the Author field, with the Louvain clustering algorithm applied to detect community structures, and association normalization used to standardize edge weights. The automatic layout was employed for visualization, including the 50 most collaborative authors. A minimum of one co-authored publication was required for edge inclusion. To improve network clarity and interpretability, a repulsion force of 0.1 was set, and isolated nodes were removed.

An institutional collaboration network was generated using Biblioshiny to analyze co-authorship patterns among the 50 most active institutions. The Louvain algorithm and association normalization were applied, with a minimum of one co-authored publication required. Isolated nodes were removed, and a repulsion force of 0.1 was used to improve clarity.

A country collaboration network was constructed using Biblioshiny to examine international co-authorship patterns. The analysis included the 50 most productive countries, using the Louvain algorithm and association normalization. A minimum of one co-authored publication was required, with isolated nodes removed and a repulsion force of 0.1 applied. The network revealed leading countries and transnational research clusters in the field.

The research methodology is presented in Table 1, and the data collection and screening process is illustrated in figure 1.

Table 1: Study Design and Methodology

The focus of the research incest ve sosyal çalışma
Years of publications 1980-2023
Research Keywords İncest and social work
Analysis of research data R Studio-Biblioshiny software program
Results
Discussion and Conclusion

Data Collection

Data Collection

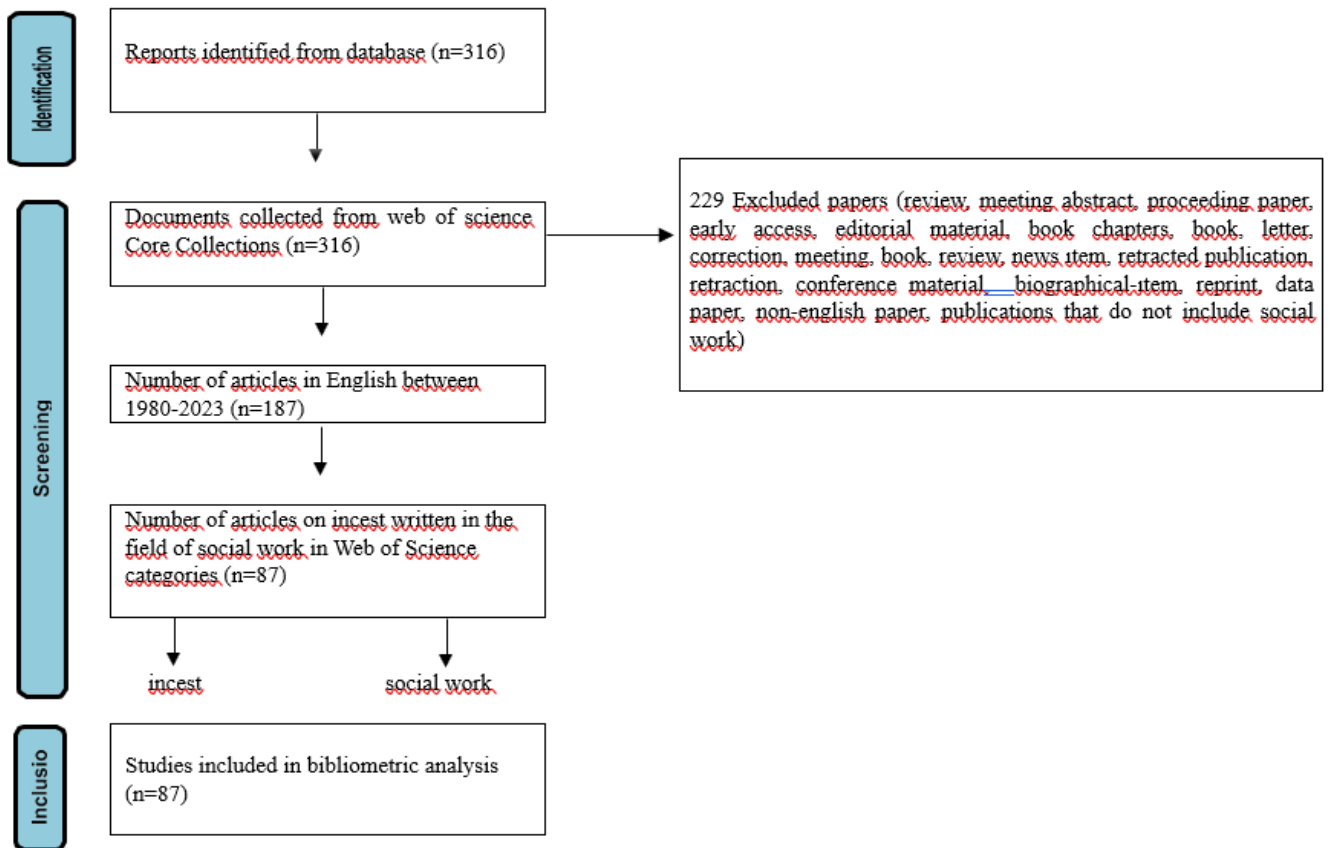


Figure 1: Bibliometric analysis of incest and social work focused publications

RESULTS

Figure 1 presents the basic characteristics of scholarly publications indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) under the “Social Work” category and related to the topic of incest. A total of 87 original research articles were identified as having been published between 1980 and 2023. The study examines various dimensions of the scholarly output, including annual publication trends, the most cited articles worldwide, the journals with the highest publication and citation counts, the most prolific authors, author productivity over time, the most frequently cited authors, commonly used author keywords, thematic mapping of key concepts, temporal trends in topic development, author collaboration networks, leading institutions, and the scientific productivity and collaboration patterns of countries.

Table 2 summarizes the main bibliometric parameters of the dataset. According to the filters applied via the Biblioshiny interface, the 87 articles were produced between 1980 and 2023. These publications were authored by a total of 141 unique scholars. The average age of the documents was 26.7 years, with a mean citation rate of 18.94 citations per article. The total number of references across all publications was 2,657. The annual growth rate of publications in this field was calculated as -1.6%, indicating a declining trend in scholarly output. The comprehensive findings related to all articles included in the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Main Information

Incest and Social Work

Description

Results



sssjournal.com

International Social Sciences Studies Journal



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MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA

Timespan	1980:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	25
Documents	87
Annual Growth Rate %	-1,6
Document Average Age	26,7
Average citations per doc	18,94
References	2657

DOCUMENT CONTENTS

Keywords Plus (ID)	157
Author's Keywords (DE)	125

AUTHORS

Authors	141
Authors of single-authored docs	40

AUTHORS COLLABORATION

Single-authored docs	43
Co-Authors per Doc	1,76
International co-authorships %	3,448

DOCUMENT TYPES

Article	87
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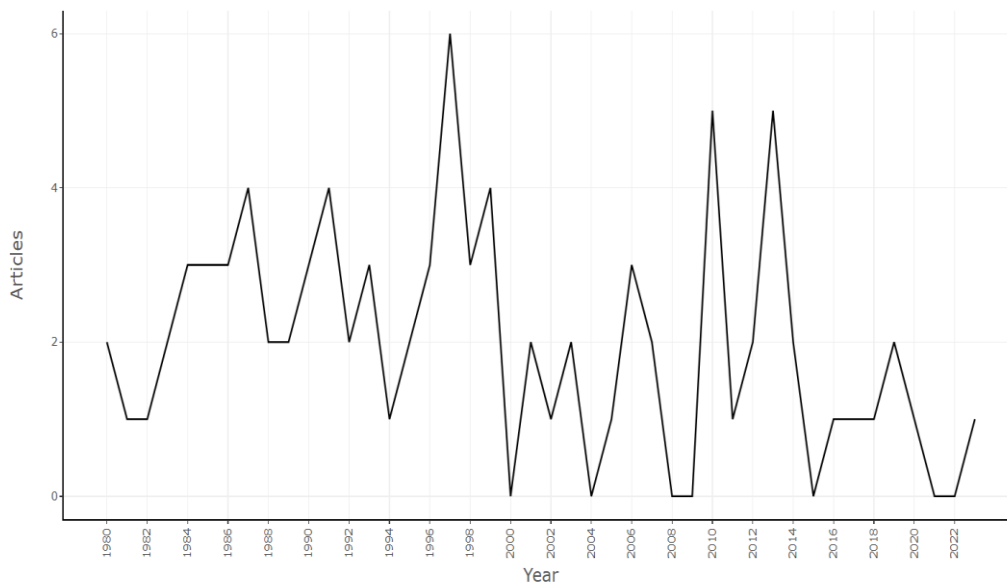


Figure 2: Annual Scientific Production

An examination of the number of articles published over time reveals fluctuations in publication frequency between 1980 and 2023, with periods of both growth and decline. According to the distribution of publications and their corresponding growth rates, the following pattern was observed: In 2023 and 2020, 1 article was published each year. No publications were identified in 2022, 2021, 2015, 2009, 2008, 2004, and 2000. In 2019 and 2014, 2 articles were published; in 2013 and 2010, 5 articles each; in 2012 and 2007, 2 articles each; in 2011, 2018, 2017, and 2016, 1 article per year; in 2006, 3 articles; in 2005 and 2002, 1 article each; in 2003 and 2001, 2 articles each. In the 1990s, 1999 had 4 publications, 1998 had 3, and 1997 had the highest number with 6 articles. This was followed by 1996 with 3 articles, 1995 with 2, 1994 with 1, 1993 with 3, 1992 with 2, 1991 with 4, and 1990 with 3 articles. During the 1980s, there were 2 articles in 1989 and 1988, 4 in 1987, 3 in 1986, 1985, and 1984, 2 in 1983, and 1 article each in 1982 and 1981. In 1980, 2 articles were published. Based on this data, the highest publication output was observed in 1997. In contrast, no articles were published in 2022, 2021, or 2015. These findings are presented in Figure 2 and Table 3.

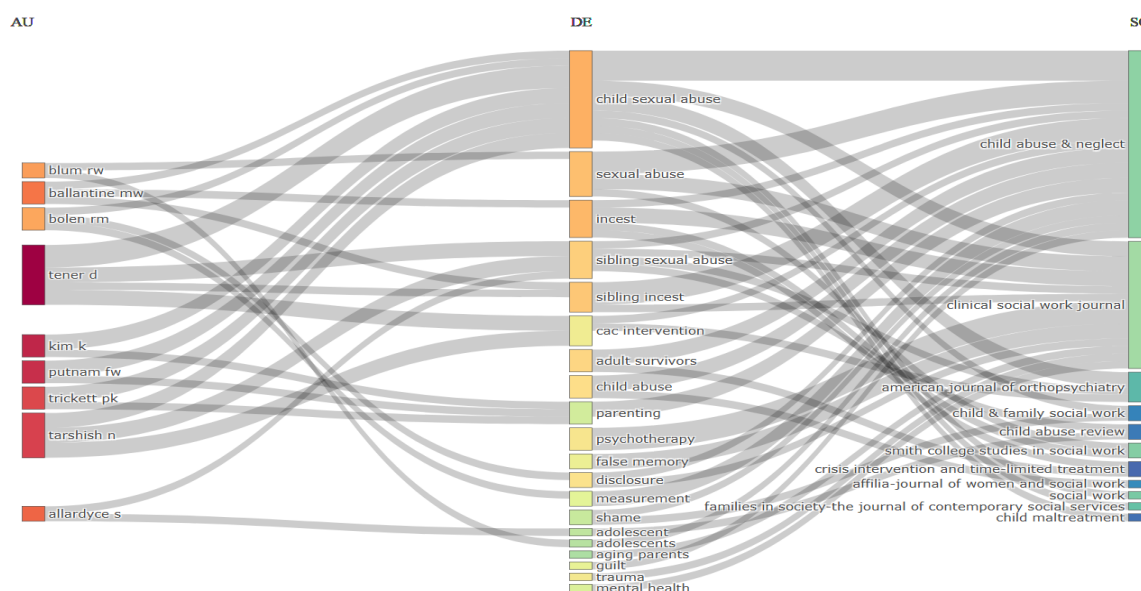


Figure 3: Three-Field Plot

This figure presents a Three-Field Plot generated using the Biblioshiny interface. The three fields are represented as follows: AU (Authors) on the left column, DE (Keywords) in the center, and SO (Sources) on the right column. According to the plot, Tener is identified as the most productive author. The keywords associated with Tener's publications include child sexual abuse, sibling sexual abuse, sibling incest, and CAC intervention. The second most productive author is Tarshish, who focused primarily on sibling sexual abuse and CAC intervention. Blum concentrated on the terms sexual abuse and adolescents, while Ballantine used keywords such as incest, child sexual abuse, and sibling incest. Bolen focused on disclosure and measurement. Kim, Trickett, and Putnam emphasized topics such as child sexual abuse and parenting, whereas Allardyce focused on the term adolescent. The authors' works were primarily published in Child Abuse & Neglect and the Clinical Social Work Journal. Among these, Child Abuse & Neglect appears to be the journal with the highest number of publications on the subject.

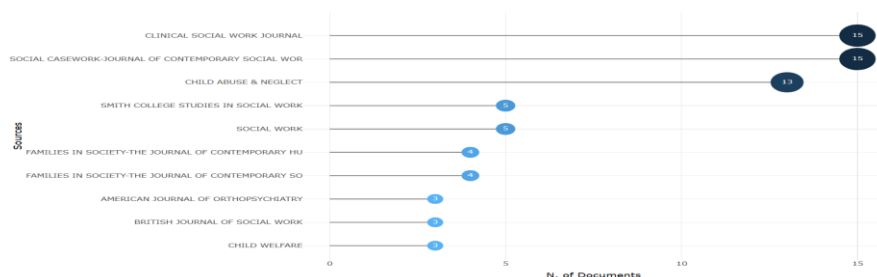


Figure 4: Most Relevant Sources

The analyzed studies were published across a total of 25 journals. Figure 4 displays the top 10 journals with the highest number of publications in this field. The Clinical Social Work Journal and Social Casework – Journal of Contemporary Social Work each published the highest number of articles, with 15 publications. This is followed by Child Abuse & Neglect, which published 13 articles. Smith College Studies in Social Work and Social Work each published 5 articles. Families in Society – The Journal of Contemporary Human Services and Families in Society – The Journal of Contemporary Social Services published 4 articles each. Lastly, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, British Journal of Social Work, and Child Welfare each published 3 articles.

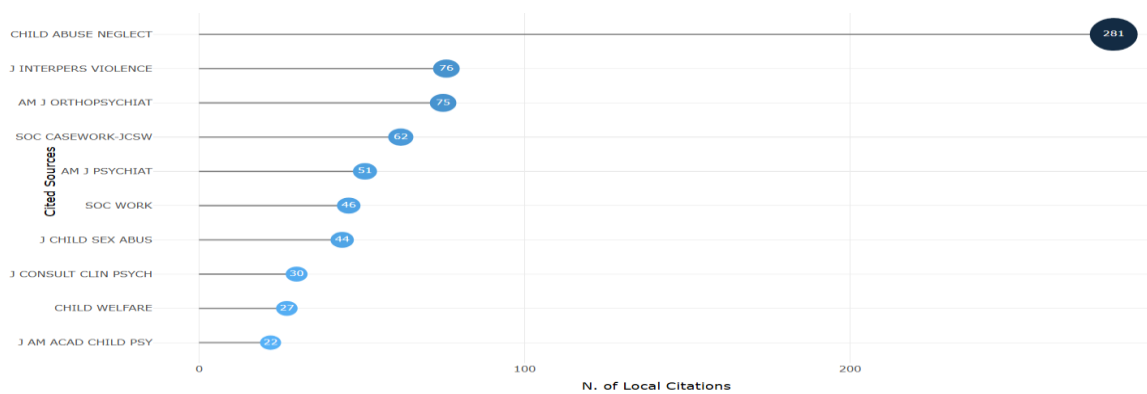


Figure 5: Most Cited Sources

Figure 5 presents the top 10 journals with the highest number of citations related to publications on incest within the field of social work. According to the , Child Abuse & Neglect ranks first with 281 citations. Journal of Interpersonal Violence is in second place with 76 citations, followed by the American Journal of Orthopsychiatry with 75 citations. Social Casework – Journal of Contemporary Social Work is ranked fourth with 62 citations, while the American Journal of Psychiatry ranks fifth with 51 citations. Social Work holds sixth place with 46 citations, followed by the Journal of Child Sexual Abuse in seventh place with 44 citations. The Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology ranks eighth with 30 citations, Child Welfare ranks ninth with 27 citations, and Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (J. Am. Acad. Child Psy.) is in tenth place with 22 citations.

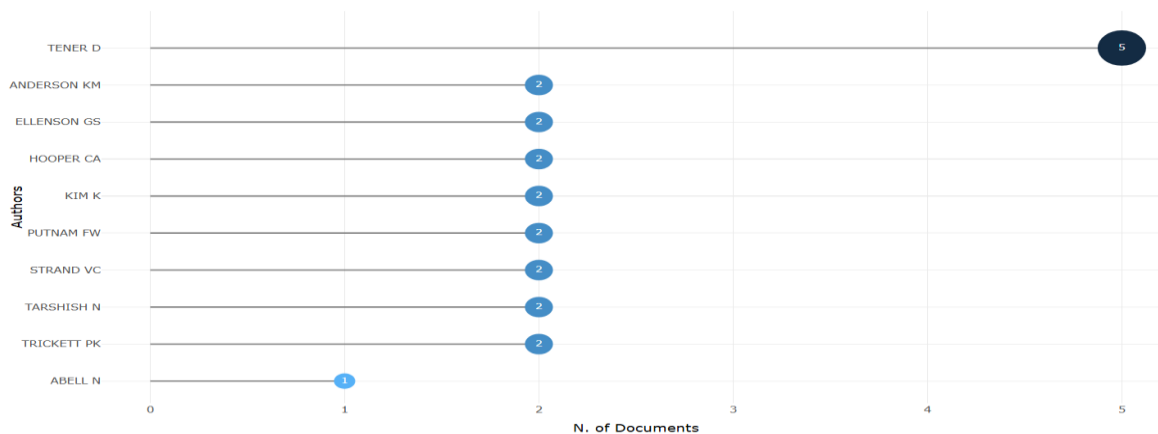


Figure 6: Most Relevant Authors

Figure 6 shows the authors with the highest number of publications on the topic. D. Tener is identified as the most productive author, with five publications ($f = 5$). Authors such as K.M. Anderson, G.S. Ellenson, C.A. Hooper, K. Kim, F.W. Putnam, V.C. Strand, N. Tarshish, and P.K. Trickett each contributed two publications ($f = 2$). The least productive author in this area is N. Abell, with one publication ($f = 1$). The combined contribution of the top three most productive authors accounts for approximately 10.3% of all articles included in the study. Figure 7 illustrates the publication trends of these authors over time.

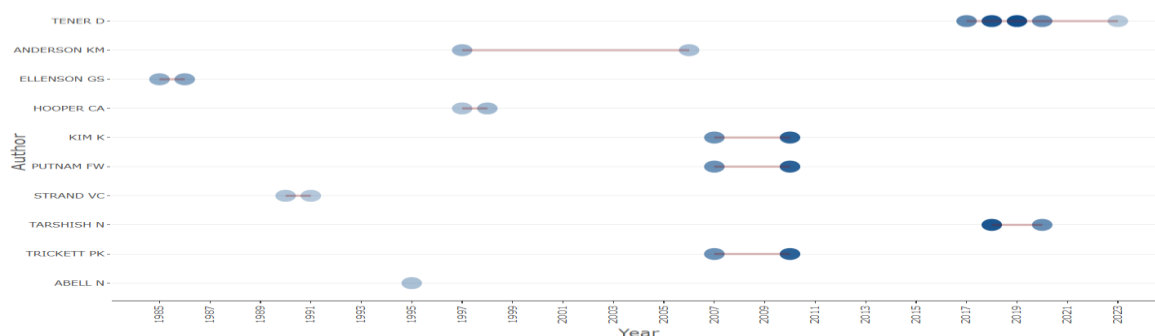


Figure 7: Authors' Production over Time

Figure 7 presents the distribution of publications produced by the listed authors between 1980 and 2023 on the topic. D. Tener published one article each in the years 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2023 ($f = 5$). K.M. Anderson published two articles in total, in 1997 and 2006 ($f = 2$), while G.S. Ellenson published in 1985 and 1986 ($f = 2$). C.A. Hooper contributed publications in 1997 and 1998 ($f = 2$), and K. Kim published in 2007 and 2010 ($f = 2$).

Similarly, F.W. Putnam published in 2007 and 2010 ($f = 2$), and V.C. Strand contributed in 1990 and 1991 ($f = 2$). N. Tarshish published articles in 2018 and 2020 ($f = 2$), and P.K. Trickett published in 2007 and 2010 ($f = 2$). Finally, N. Abell had a single publication in 1995 ($f = 1$).

Table 3: Most Local Cited Authors

Author	Local Citations
CRAFT JL	11
DIETZ CA	11
ELLENSON GS	9
BLAKEWHITE J	5
HERZBERGER SD	5
KLINE CM	5
RUDD JM	5
BALLANTINE MW	4
GORDY PL	4
TAUBMAN S	4

Table 3 displays the most frequently cited authors among the articles included in the dataset on incest and social work. According to the findings, the highest number of citations ($f = 11$) were received by J.L. Craft and C.A. Dietz. They are followed by G.S. Ellenson, who received 9 citations ($f = 9$).

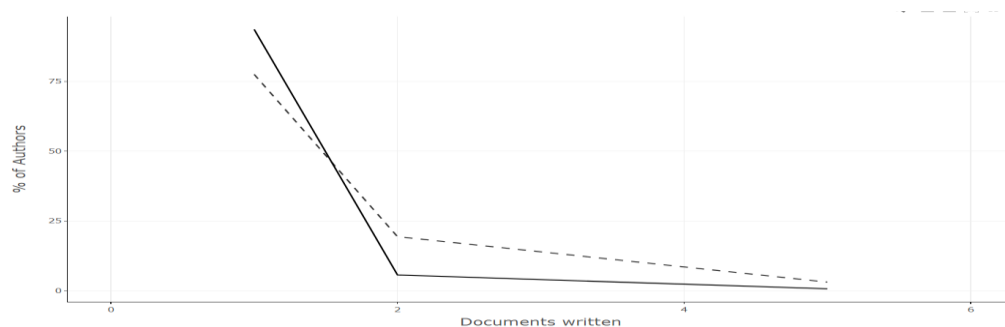


Figure 8: Author Productivity through Lotka's Law

In this study, the validity of Lotka's Law was tested to examine the productivity of authors. The horizontal axis represents the number of documents (articles) authored, while the vertical axis indicates the percentage of authors relative to the total author population. The observed data show a general alignment with the classic Lotka distribution (represented by the dashed line). Notably, the proportion of authors with only one publication is considerably high, accounting for approximately 80% of all authors. Specifically, 132 authors contributed only one publication, 8 authors produced two publications, and 1 author authored five publications.

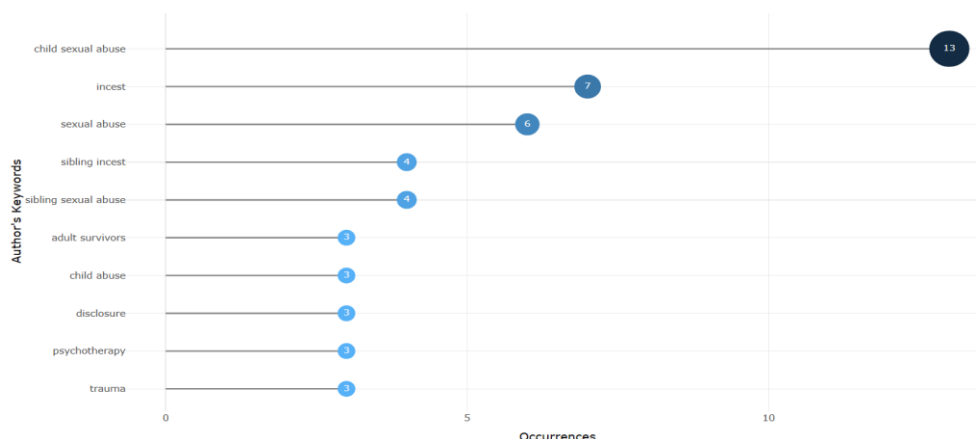


Figure 9: Most Frequent Words

This figure illustrates the frequency of author-defined keywords in the analyzed studies. These keywords reflect how the topic has been conceptualized by the authors and indicate the thematic orientations of the research. The analysis shows that child sexual abuse ($f = 13$) is the most frequently used and central keyword, suggesting that incest is addressed not only as a familial taboo but also as a form of child abuse. From a social work perspective, this framing necessitates child protection efforts, risk assessments, and psychosocial support interventions. The term incest ($f = 7$) is the second most frequently occurring keyword, indicating that it is treated as a complex and deeply rooted form of abuse with significant psychosocial dimensions. The third most frequent term is sexual abuse ($f = 6$), further underscoring the focus on abusive dynamics within family systems. Other recurring keywords

include sibling incest and sibling sexual abuse ($f = 4$), highlighting a form of abuse that often remains hidden and underreported. The presence of adult survivors ($f = 3$) among the keywords reflects the recognition that the impact of incest extends beyond childhood and may require long-term social work intervention throughout the individual's lifespan. Additionally, the term child abuse ($f = 3$) reinforces the framing of incest within the broader context of abuse and neglect. Other notable keywords include disclosure, psychotherapy, and trauma ($f = 3$ each), emphasizing the psychological consequences of incest and the importance of therapeutic and supportive responses. Overall, the figure demonstrates that within the social work discipline, incest is not merely viewed as a private or familial issue but as a multidimensional trauma and a child protection concern. The emphasis on child sexual abuse, sibling abuse, disclosure, and psychotherapy suggests that social workers must adopt comprehensive, both individual- and system-level interventions in response to such cases.



Figure 10: Word Cloud

The Word Cloud (Author Keywords) visualization above displays the most frequently used concepts by authors in their respective publications. The most prominent term in the word cloud is child sexual abuse, which visually occupies the largest space. This emphasis underscores the centrality of child protection in social work, particularly in relation to risk identification, neglect and abuse reporting mechanisms, and intervention processes. The second most prominent term is incest, indicating that the concept is directly addressed in the literature rather than being treated only implicitly or peripherally. The third most frequent term is sexual abuse. Other notable keywords with significant visual representation in the word cloud include: sibling incest, sibling sexual abuse, adult survivors, child abuse, disclosure, psychotherapy, trauma, CAC intervention, false memory, guilt, measurement, mental health, parenting, shame, adolescent, adolescents, aging parents, art interventions, and attachment theory. These terms reflect the multifaceted nature of the topic and highlight its psychological, developmental, and systemic dimensions within the context of social work.

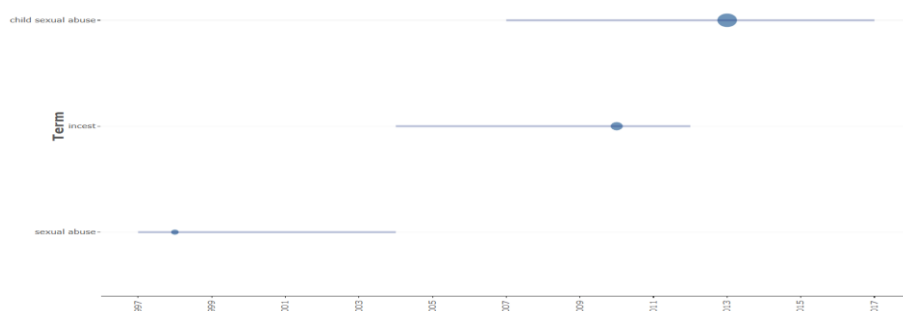


Figure 11: Trend Topics

This figure presents the results of a Trend Topics (Author Keywords) analysis, illustrating the temporal distribution of the three most frequently and consistently used keywords across the examined publications. According to the visualization, child sexual abuse emerges as the most frequently used and prominent term. This keyword began appearing in author-defined keywords starting in 2007, with a noticeable peak in 2013. Its continued presence in recent years suggests an ongoing scholarly interest and growing sensitivity toward the issue of child sexual abuse. This trend indicates an increased awareness and emphasis on child protection within the field. The term incest appears between 2004 and 2012, with its highest frequency observed in 2010. This pattern suggests that during this period, the topic of incest gained distinct attention in the literature as a separate and specific form of abuse. Finally, the keyword sexual abuse was most prominent between 1997 and 2004, particularly in 1998. During this earlier

period, the literature tended to address sexual abuse in a more general sense, without yet distinguishing specific subtypes such as incest or child sexual abuse.

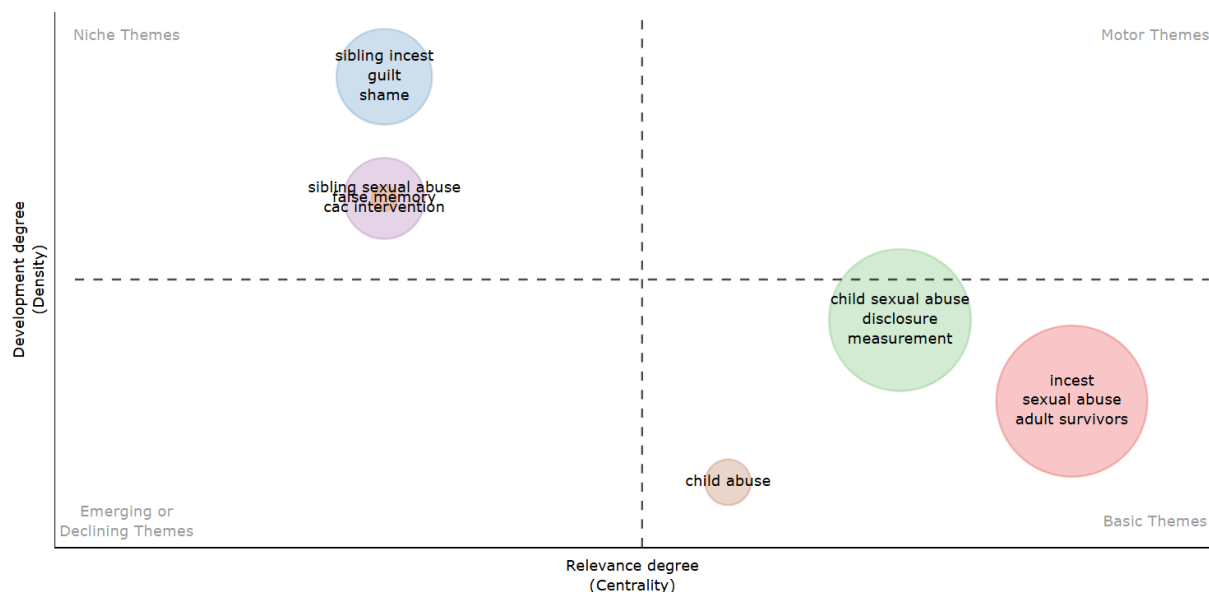


Figure 12: Thematic Map

This thematic map was generated based on author keywords and identifies four thematic quadrants. Each bubble in the map represents a cluster of keywords, where the size indicates the frequency of the theme, and the position reflects its centrality (x-axis) and density (y-axis). There are no themes located in the upper-right quadrant, which typically represents motor themes. In other words, the analysis reveals that there are currently no keyword clusters that are both well-developed and central to the field. This suggests that a dominant and guiding core theme has yet to emerge in the literature on incest within social work. In the upper-middle-right area of the map, child sexual abuse, disclosure, and measurement appear as basic and transitional themes. This cluster demonstrates high centrality and moderate density, indicating their importance to the field and their potential for further development. In particular, disclosure and measurement may be seen as critical areas for future research attention. The lower-right quadrant includes basic themes, such as incest, sexual abuse, and adult survivors. These themes are considered foundational to the field, yet the literature suggests a need for more in-depth and systematic exploration.

In the lower-left area, child abuse appears near the “emerging or declining themes” zone. While child abuse is a significant concept, it encompasses various subtypes including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect. Given the incest-focused nature of this dataset, the term child abuse appears less central when compared to more specific terms like child sexual abuse or incest. The upper-left quadrant represents niche themes, characterized by high density but low centrality. In this area, sibling incest, guilt, and shame are identified. These publications focus on highly specific topics such as sibling-perpetrated incest and the emotional responses of victims, particularly feelings of guilt and shame. While these are important areas of inquiry, their limited connections to other themes may indicate their current peripheral status in the field. These emotions, especially guilt, may act as barriers to disclosure by causing victims to delay or avoid reporting the abuse. In the lower-central area, a transitional theme cluster includes sibling sexual abuse, false memory, and CAC intervention. These keywords show low density and relatively low centrality, suggesting that they have not yet established a strong presence in the literature or are in the early stages of development.

Table 4: Most Global Cited Documents

Documents	DOI	Total Citations
CHANDY JM, 1996, CHILD ABUSE NEGLECT	10.1016/S0145-2134(96)00117-2	129
EASTON SD, 2013, CLIN SOC WORK J	10.1007/s10615-012-0420-3	114

RUDD JM, 1999, CHILD ABUSE NEGLECT	10.1016/S0145-2134(99)00058-7	98
NASJLETI M, 1980, CHILD WELFARE	NA	64
SOMER E, 2001, AM J ORTHOPSYCHIAT	10.1037/0002-9432.71.3.332	60
KIM K, 2010, CHILD ABUSE NEGLECT	10.1016/j.chiabu.2010.01.007	52
BALLANTINE MW, 2012, CLIN SOC WORK J	10.1007/s10615-011-0331-8	47
ZURAVIN SJ, 1999, CHILD ABUSE NEGLECT	10.1016/S0145-2134(99)00045-9	45
DIETZ CA, 1980, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	10.1177/104438948006101002	45
ELLENSON GS, 1986, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	10.1177/104438948606700304	42
WESTBURY E, 1999, CHILD ABUSE NEGLECT	10.1016/S0145-2134(98)00109-4	40
ALAGGIA R, 2005, FAM SOC	10.1606/1044-3894.2457	39
RISLEY-CURTISS C, 2003, AFFILIA J WOM SOC WO	10.1177/0886109903257629	39
BLAKEWHITE J, 1985, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	10.1177/104438948506600702	39
ELLENSON GS, 1985, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	10.1177/104438948506600902	37
KIM K, 2007, CHILD MALTREATMENT	10.1177/1077559507305997	33
MCINTYRE K, 1981, SOC WORK	10.1093/sw/26.6.462	31
TENER D, 2018, AM J ORTHOPSYCHIAT	10.1037/ort0000311	29
TENER D, 2019, CHILD ABUSE NEGLECT	10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.01.010	27
GORDY PL, 1983, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	10.1177/104438948306400506	26

Table 4 presents the top 20 most cited documents in terms of Global Citations (GC), highlighting those that have shaped the broader academic discourse on incest in social work. It includes information such as publication year, journal title, and DOI to emphasize their accessibility and academic reach. The most globally cited article is “Gender-specific outcomes for sexually abused adolescents” by Chandy, Blum, and Resnick, published in *Child Abuse & Neglect* in 1996 (DOI: 10.1016/S0145-2134(96)00117-2), with a total of 129 citations. The second most cited article is “Disclosure of child sexual abuse among adult male survivors” by Easton, published in 2013 in the *Clinical Social Work Journal* (DOI: 10.1007/s10615-012-0420-3), which received 114 citations. The third is “Brother-sister incest – father-daughter incest: A comparison of characteristics and consequences” by Rudd and Herzberger, published in 1999 in *Child Abuse & Neglect* (DOI: 10.1016/s0145-2134(99)00058-7), with 98 citations.

Table 5: Most Local Cited Documents

Document	Year	Local Citations	Global Citations	LC/GC Ratio (%)
DIETZ CA, 1980, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1980	11	45	24,44
BLAKEWHITE J, 1985, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1985	5	39	12,82
ELLENSON GS, 1986, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1986	5	42	11,90
RUDD JM, 1999, CHILD ABUSE NEGLECT	1999	5	98	5,10
GORDY PL, 1983, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1983	4	26	15,38
TAUBMAN S, 1984, SOC WORK	1984	4	10	40,00
ELLENSON GS, 1985, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1985	4	37	10,81
WATTENBERG E, 1985, CHILD WELFARE	1985	4	22	18,18
BALLANTINE MW, 2012, CLIN SOC WORK J	2012	4	47	8,51
MCINTYRE K, 1981, SOC WORK	1981	3	31	9,68
DOMINELLI L, 1989, BRIT J SOC WORK	1989	3	26	11,54
ROBERTS L, 1989, SOC WORK GROUPS	1989	3	23	13,04
CORCORAN J, 1998, FAM SOC-J CONTEMP H	1998	3	18	16,67
ALAGGIA R, 2005, FAM SOC	2005	2	39	5,13
MONAHAN K, 2010, CLIN SOC WORK J	2010	2	25	8,00
NASJLETI M, 1980, CHILD WELFARE	1980	1	64	1,56
HOORWITZ AN, 1983, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1983	1	8	12,50
FARIA G, 1984, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1984	1	23	4,35
PIERCE LH, 1987, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1987	1	6	16,67
KOCH K, 1987, SOC CASEWORK-JCSW	1987	1	12	8,33

Table 5 lists the articles with the highest Local Citation (LC) values within the dataset, shedding light on works that have had the greatest impact on the internal discourse of this specific literature sample. The table also provides local-to-global citation ratios, offering insight into how well each article is integrated into this focused scholarly community. From the perspective of local citations, the most cited article within the dataset is “Family Dynamics of Incest: A New Perspective” by C.A. Dietz and J.L. Craft, published in *Social Casework* in 1980 (DOI: 10.1177/104438948006101002), which received 11 local citations (LC) and 45 global citations (GC), corresponding to a local citation rate of 24.44%. Although the article by Rudd and Herzberger (1999) on sibling versus father-daughter incest is highly influential in terms of global impact (GC: 98), it received fewer citations

together in the same documents. In the visualization, nodes represent individual academic articles, links represent the number of times two articles were co-cited, colors indicate thematic clusters of closely related works, and node size reflects citation frequency—the larger the node, the more central and influential the source. The most central works in the network focus on themes such as incest and trauma. In the red cluster, prominent and highly cited studies include Russell D.E.H. (1986), Gelinias D.J. (1983), Sgroi S.M. (1982), and Meiselman K.C. (1978). In the blue cluster, influential sources are Herman J. (1981), Dietz C.A. (1980), Everson M.D. (1989), and Lustig N. (1966). The green cluster includes works such as Canavan M.M. (1992), Pivotal M. (1992), and Carlson B. (2006), while the purple cluster features Browne A. (1986), Goodman B. (1985), and Beitchman J.H. (1992). In the orange cluster, key studies include Arata C.M. (1998), Alaggia R. (2002), and Lamb S. (1994). Several authors—particularly Russell D.E.H., Finkelhor D., Meiselman K.C., and Herman J. serve as conceptual bridges between clusters, indicating their interdisciplinary influence. These works not only occupy central positions within the network but also facilitate intellectual integration across different thematic domains. Overall, this visualization reveals the most frequently cited and structurally significant studies in the literature on incest, trauma, child sexual abuse, and social work. Foundational authors such as Finkelhor, Russell, and Herman have played a central role in shaping the field, with their works acting as key connectors between otherwise distinct scholarly communities.

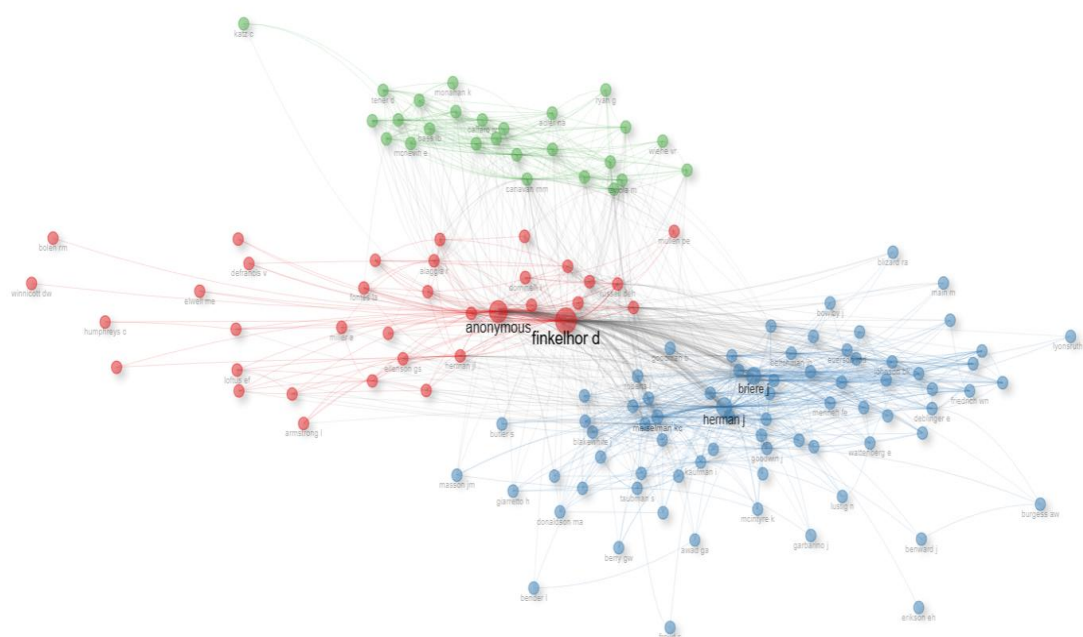


Figure 15: Co-citation Network

This co-citation network visualizes the conceptual proximity and clustering of authors based on the frequency with which they are cited together. The network is based on co-citation data generated through the Biblioshiny interface. The objective is to identify the scientific influence and structural position of core authors within the literature, offering insight into the intellectual structure of the field. Authors are grouped into three distinct clusters. The most frequently co-cited author, David Finkelhor, appears at the center of the red cluster, which represents the most central and thematically cohesive group in the network. Finkelhor is a key figure due to his extensive work on child abuse and sexual abuse, making his contributions thematically integrative across multiple subfields. Other prominent authors in the red cluster include Alaggia, Ellenson, Dominelli, Russell, and Mullender. Notably, the node labeled Anonymous also occupies a central position within this cluster, representing a significant point of connection in the co-citation network, possibly reflecting shared references to confidential or anonymized sources. In the blue cluster, leading authors include Herman, Briere, and Meiselman, whose work predominantly focuses on trauma and clinical responses to abuse. In the green cluster, Canavan stands out as the most prominent contributor. This structure highlights the thematic coherence within each cluster, with Finkelhor acting as a bridging figure between the broader domains of child sexual abuse, trauma, and social work.

Social networks were analyzed at three levels: author collaboration, institutional collaboration, and country collaboration. The networks were constructed by examining the top 50 most productive authors, the top 50 institutions with the highest levels of collaboration, and 50 countries with at least one publication. Clusters were formed using the Louvain algorithm, with each cluster represented by a distinct color. In the visualizations, each

ellipse represents an author, institution, or country. The thickness of the connecting lines indicates the strength or intensity of collaboration between two nodes i.e., the frequency of co-authored publications or joint affiliations.

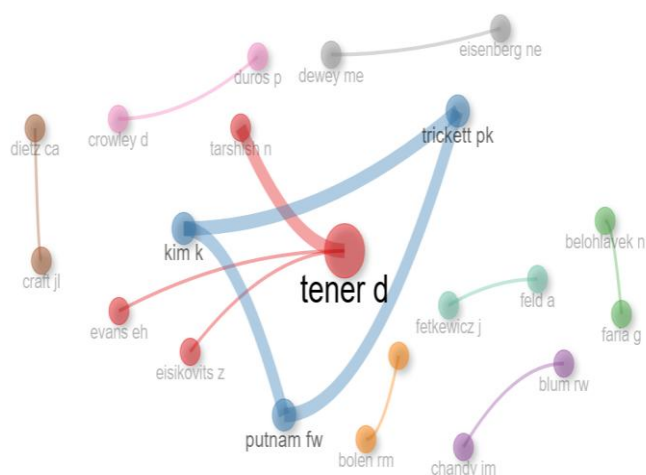


Figure 16: Collaboration Network Authors

The author collaboration network is presented in Figure 16. An analysis of the network structure reveals the formation of nine distinct clusters, each of which exhibits collaboration exclusively within its own group, with no inter-cluster collaboration observed. The most collaborative author in the network is D. Tener, who also has the largest node, indicating that they are one of the most central figures in the field. Tener has more and stronger collaboration links compared to other authors. Notably, Tener is connected with Evans, Eiskovits, and Tarshish. The thickness of the connecting lines indicates the intensity of the collaboration. In the second-largest cluster, represented in blue, Trickett, Putnam, and Kim all share equal-sized nodes and are connected through mutual collaboration. In other words, this cluster lacks a single central figure, and all three authors form a triadic collaboration network. Other clusters include: Dietz and Craft in the brown cluster, Crowley and Duros in the pink cluster, Dewey and Eisenberg in the gray cluster, Bolen and Gradante in the orange cluster, Chandy and Blum in the purple cluster, Belohlavek and Faria in light green, Fetkewicz and Feld in aqua green. Each of these pairs collaborates internally but remains disconnected from other clusters. This visualization highlights the central role of certain authors particularly Tener in the literature on incest and social work. It also reflects a tendency for collaboration to occur within isolated groups, rather than across clusters, suggesting limited inter-group academic cooperation in this field.

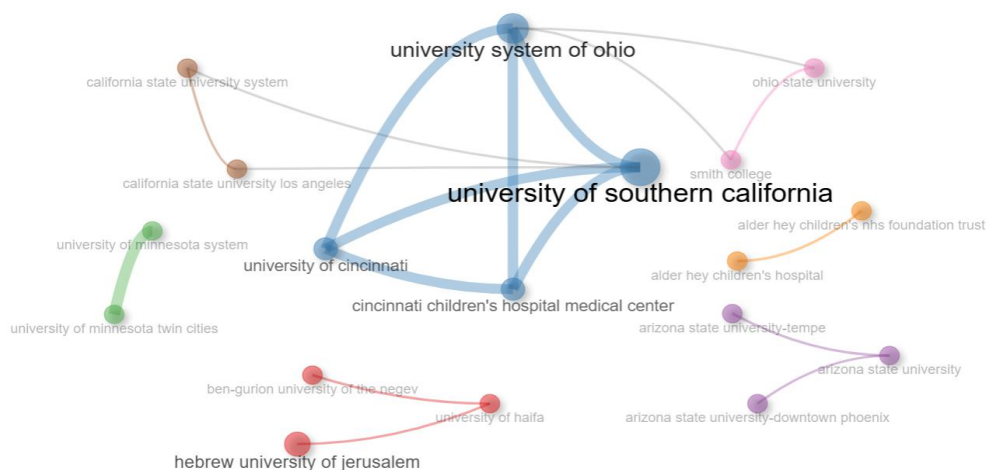


Figure 17: Collaboration Network Institutions

This figure presents the Collaboration Network Institutions map, illustrating institutional collaborations specifically within the context of "incest and social work" research. The network reveals seven distinct clusters, with some institutions collaborating across clusters, while others remain limited to internal, intra-cluster collaborations. The University of Southern California, located in the blue cluster, holds the largest and most central node in the network, indicating its prominent role and broad range of collaborations. It maintains strong institutional

partnerships with the University System of Ohio, the University of Cincinnati, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Additional connections include California State University Los Angeles and the California State University System. The University System of Ohio also collaborates with Ohio State University and Smith College, reinforcing its position within the national network. In the red cluster, institutions such as Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and the University of Haifa are closely connected among themselves but remain isolated from the broader network. This suggests a regionally focused collaboration primarily among Israeli institutions, contributing meaningfully to the field while remaining peripheral in the global institutional network. The orange cluster shows internal collaboration between Alder Hey Children's Hospital and Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust. In the purple cluster, Arizona State University, Arizona State University – Downtown Phoenix, and Arizona State University – Tempe demonstrate strong internal ties. The green cluster includes the University of Minnesota System and University of Minnesota Twin Cities, which are also linked only internally. Overall, this visualization suggests that research on incest and social work is predominantly led by U.S.-based institutions, with University of Southern California and University System of Ohio forming central hubs in a strong national collaboration network. Additionally, regional collaborations in countries such as Israel and the United Kingdom are evident, although these are more isolated from the global academic network.

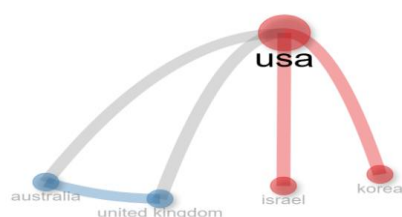


Figure 18: Collaboration Network Countries

This figure illustrates the Collaboration Network Countries, highlighting international research partnerships in the field. The United States (USA) appears as the most central country in the network, represented by the largest node, indicating its dominant role in terms of international collaboration. The USA maintains research partnerships with Israel, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and Australia. This central position reflects the United States' global leadership in both publication output and international collaboration in the field of incest and social work. Additionally, a direct collaborative link is observed between the United Kingdom and Australia, further contributing to international research dynamics.

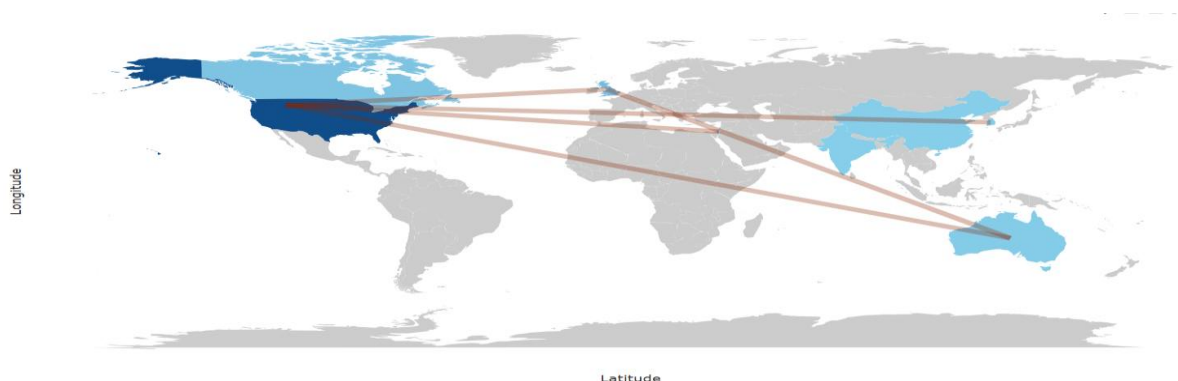


Figure19: Countries' Collaboration World Map

This figure presents the Countries' Collaboration World Map, which visualizes international scientific collaborations in the specific academic domain of incest and social work. The map is based on co-authored publications and reflects global research partnerships within this thematic area. Countries are shaded in varying tones of blue. The darker the shade, the higher the publication output or collaborative intensity of that country. The United States (USA) appears in the darkest blue, indicating its leading role and greatest contribution to the field. Lighter shades of blue are observed in countries such as Israel, South Korea, Australia, the United Kingdom, and India, indicating a moderate level of contribution to the literature. While these countries have participated in international collaborations, their overall influence and output remain more limited in comparison to the USA. The lines extending outward from the USA to other countries represent international collaborations, with the thickness and direction of the lines indicating the strength and directionality of these partnerships. The USA is clearly positioned at the center of the global collaboration network, maintaining links with multiple continents, including Australia, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. However, certain regions such as Africa and South America are absent from the network, suggesting a lack of representation or collaboration in this specific research domain.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the topic of incest is addressed in the social work literature in a limited but conceptually rich manner. The bibliometric analysis revealed that only 87 original research articles were published between 1980 and 2023. This suggests that incest remains an underexplored and academically marginalized subject within the discipline of social work. The negative annual growth rate (−1.6%) reflects fluctuating scholarly interest and the absence of sustained academic focus on the issue.

Most of the 87 analyzed articles were published in journals such as *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *Clinical Social Work Journal*, and *Social Casework – Journal of Contemporary Social Work*. Citation analysis shows that *Child Abuse & Neglect* leads in both publication count and total citations (GC = 281), underscoring its role as a key reference source in the fields of incest, child sexual abuse, and trauma. Meanwhile, practice-oriented journals such as *Clinical Social Work Journal* appear to provide a critical platform for case-based practice, suggesting the need for articles that blend theoretical insight with field experience.

Among the most prolific authors, D. Tener stands out. Tener's focus on "sibling incest" and "CAC intervention" suggests a shift toward emerging subtopics in the field. Other influential contributors, such as Tarshish, Bolen, and Trickett, have also contributed significantly to the conceptual development of the literature.

The keyword analysis revealed a strong concentration around the terms child sexual abuse, incest, and sibling sexual abuse. This suggests that incest is increasingly framed not merely as a private or familial issue, but as a structural child protection concern (Finkelhor et al., 1986; Courtois, 2010). However, the thematic map indicates that motor themes have not yet emerged, highlighting a gap in theoretically and methodologically cohesive frameworks. Notably, the upper-right quadrant of the thematic map representing motor themes remains unoccupied. Motor themes are characterized by both high centrality and high density, indicating well-developed and structurally important topics within the field. The absence of such themes suggests that, while several foundational concepts (e.g., "incest," "child sexual abuse," "adult survivors") are consistently addressed, they have not yet evolved into cohesive, methodologically integrated research programs. This thematic gap highlights the need for further theoretical consolidation and interdisciplinary dialogue to elevate core topics from basic to motor status. Future studies could focus on synthesizing fragmented knowledge, developing standardized measurement tools, and integrating trauma-informed, feminist, and systemic approaches more robustly within the incest and social work literature. In this regard, transitional themes such as disclosure, measurement, and child sexual abuse demand deeper scholarly attention.

Although "sibling incest" appears as a niche theme in the thematic map indicating low centrality yet moderate development it represents a critical and underexplored area within the field. Its peripheral position may reflect the persistent cultural and institutional silence surrounding this form of abuse, as well as limited empirical engagement. A more nuanced bibliometric exploration of its temporal evolution (e.g., through trend topic or thematic evolution analyses) and geographical concentration (e.g., country-level production) would offer valuable insight into where and when scholarly attention to this topic has emerged. Identifying whether certain national contexts (e.g., North America, Scandinavia, or Israel) have produced more focused research on sibling incest could help explain current gaps and inform future directions for cross-cultural or comparative inquiry.

Disclosure is frequently emphasized in the literature as a critical threshold for child protection. Bibliometric findings show that the term disclosure occupies a central position in both author keywords and thematic maps, indicating that the disclosure process is shaped not only by individual factors but also by institutional and structural dynamics (Easton, 2013; Tener, 2019). Notably, the low disclosure rates among male survivors (Finkelhor et al., 1986) highlight the suppressive effects of gender norms, shame culture, and societal expectations. The inclusion of CAC intervention in keyword clusters further suggests that professional support systems facilitate disclosure. In this context, it is vital for social workers to create safe environments that support the disclosure process.

Shame and guilt, frequently experienced by survivors of incest, act as powerful internal barriers to disclosure. The fact that shame and guilt are classified as niche themes in the upper-left quadrant of the thematic map indicates that, while addressed in the literature, these concepts remain peripheral (Scheff, 2006; Kennedy & Prock, 2018). In sibling incest cases in particular, feelings of shame are often intensified and frequently normalized under labels such as "childhood play" (McVeigh, 2003; Cyr et al., 2002). To address these emotions, social workers must adopt trauma-informed approaches, practice empathic listening, and implement strength-based interventions. The significance of psychotherapy in helping survivors cope with shame and guilt is further supported by the frequent occurrence of psychotherapy in author keywords.

The Trend Topics (Author Keywords) analysis provides valuable insight into the conceptual evolution of incest within the social work literature. This analysis highlights which themes have gained prominence over time and how author-selected keywords have shifted. According to the findings, child sexual abuse has been the most consistently used and central term. It began appearing regularly after 2007, with a marked increase in 2013. This pattern reflects growing academic awareness and social sensitivity toward child sexual abuse and has likely influenced policy reforms and social work intervention models. From a disciplinary perspective, this suggests that incest is no longer perceived solely as a family-based violation but as a broad and complex form of abuse that necessitates a child protection response. The ongoing focus on this term may also reflect increasing interest in interdisciplinary interventions for child welfare.

The term incest became more prominent between 2004 and 2012, peaking in 2010. This development indicates that incest began to be addressed as a distinct category in child abuse research, with its own psychosocial dynamics, disclosure processes, and cultural contexts. Prior to this, incest was more often subsumed under the broader umbrella of sexual abuse, which dominated the literature between 1997 and 2004, especially in 1998. This conceptual shift reflects the field's growing maturity and the need for more nuanced, targeted interventions. It also suggests that social work policies have become increasingly sensitive, context-aware, and typology-specific.

Co-citation analysis further reveals that authors such as Finkelhor, Herman, Russell, and Courtois form the intellectual backbone of the field, acting as conceptual bridges across thematic areas. Their works have helped structure the literature around key themes such as child abuse, trauma, shame, and silence. In particular, research exploring the impact of shame and guilt on disclosure (Scheff, 2006; Kennedy & Prock, 2018) suggests the need for more sensitive and empowering interventions that facilitate survivors' ability to share their experiences.

Within the co-citation network, scholars such as David Finkelhor, Judith Herman, Diana Russell, and Christine Courtois emerge as central figures, not only due to their citation frequency but also their integrative influence across multiple thematic domains. Finkelhor's child abuse models (1984, 1986) and Herman's trauma theory (2015) are frequently cited frameworks that guide case evaluations in social work practice.

Effectively responding to incest cases requires social workers to engage not only in individual-level interventions but also in inter-agency collaborations. Bibliometric findings show that the strongest collaboration networks are based in the United States, particularly among institutions such as the University of Southern California, the University System of Ohio, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

In contrast, some clusters such as those involving Israeli institutions (e.g., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ben-Gurion University) appear disconnected from the global network, raising concerns about potential knowledge isolation. Given the cultural sensitivity surrounding incest, strengthening both interdisciplinary (e.g., psychiatry, social work, law) and international collaborations is essential (Kara et al., 2004).

Country-level collaboration analyses position the United States as the central hub in the global research network, with institutions such as the University of Southern California and Ohio State University leading the field. While countries like Israel have established internal publication networks, remain underrepresented. In contexts where cultural taboos are strong, academic output and visibility tend to be low. This may be due to the restrictive impact of patriarchal norms and cultural barriers on research feasibility and disclosure (Shaked et al., 2021).

Drawing on systems theory, feminist approaches, and ecological perspectives, social work has the potential to develop multi-layered interventions for addressing incest in the context of child protection (Thorman, 1983; Kara et al., 2004). However, the current literature lacks sufficient empirical evidence on the practical application of these theories in case-based interventions. By producing theoretically grounded, practice-oriented, and ethically informed research, social workers can help improve survivor well-being and enhance the protective function of society.

CONCLUSION

This study has mapped the conceptual, structural, and cultural dimensions of incest within the field of social work, highlighting how its academic visibility is shaped by both disciplinary boundaries and patriarchal silences. While the analysis reveals important thematic clusters—such as disclosure, shame, and adult survivorship—it also uncovers gaps in practice-oriented knowledge. To address these, future research and professional training should focus on strengthening trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and survivor-centered disclosure protocols. Social work practices could be enhanced through community-based partnerships and the integration of evidence-based models, such as Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), which offer multidisciplinary, child-centered approaches that can be adapted for adult survivors. Moreover, the identification of patriarchal constraints on scholarly production underscores the need for international collaboration particularly among countries with progressive child protection frameworks (e.g., Sweden, Canada, the Netherlands) to develop comparative studies and foster mutual learning.

This study employed a bibliometric analysis to examine the level of scientific production, research trends, and knowledge gaps concerning the issue of incest within the discipline of social work. Based on the review of 87 original research articles published between 1980 and 2023 in the Web of Science database using the keywords “incest” and “social work,” the following key findings emerged:

Academic output on the topic of incest remains quantitatively limited, with an overall stagnant or declining annual publication rate. The most frequently addressed themes in the literature include *child sexual abuse*, *sibling sexual abuse*, *disclosure processes*, and *psychotherapy*. While emotional dimensions such as *shame*, *guilt*, and *post-traumatic effects* are frequently discussed, they have yet to occupy a central position within the scholarly discourse.

The discipline of social work is uniquely positioned to understand and intervene in this complex area of concern. The bibliometric analysis highlights several underexplored but significant research areas—such as *sibling abuse*, *guilt*, and *assessment tools* which require further in-depth investigation.

While most studies originate from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel, countries where cultural taboos are more pronounced contribute only minimally to the field. In such cases, culturally sensitive research and locally based, case-based studies should be encouraged to reflect the nuances of the topic.

In conclusion, this study underscores the need for expanded theoretical and practice-based research on incest within the social work literature. The bibliometric findings offer researchers new areas of inquiry and opportunities for collaboration, while also providing a framework to strengthen the discipline’s role in child protection.

Furthermore, comparative analysis of social work practices, case evaluations, and intervention models within child protection systems across international contexts is recommended. Given that the effects of incest-related trauma often persist into adulthood, it is essential to develop support systems specifically designed for *adult survivors*. Supportive and empowering programs should be established to enhance survivors’ access to social work services and promote their long-term well-being.

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