Client Violence Towards Social Workers in Spain: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Violence in the workplace has important consequences for workers and their own environment. Health and social services professionals are high-risk professional groups. This research has a main aim to identify the studies on client violence towards the social worker in Spain. This aim has four specific objectives to understand the phenomenon: (1) to identify those investigations that study the violence of clients against social workers; (2) to analyze the descriptive characteristics of the selected studies; (3) to analyze the methodological characteristics of the selected studies; (4) to identify the variables associated to client violence towards the social worker. In order to achieve these objectives, the method was based on a review of the literature on studies of violence towards social workers in Spain through the PRISMA-S guidelines (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). The results show that this phenomenon effectively exists, and cast a light on a situation that social workers experience in isolation. Exploring the phenomenon in a descriptive way, the review provides information on the variables studied and the current extent of violence towards social workers by clients. The lack of studies on this subject underlines the need to continue researching into the problem from both descriptive and inferential perspectives.

Keywords: assault, client aggression, user, work, workplace violence

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La Violencia de los Clientes hacia los Trabajadores Sociales en España: Una Revisión Sistemática

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Resumen

La violencia en el lugar de trabajo tiene importantes consecuencias para los trabajadores y su propio entorno. Los profesionales de la salud y los servicios sociales son grupos profesionales de alto riesgo. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo principal identificar los estudios sobre violencia del cliente hacia el trabajador social en España. Se concreta en cuatro objetivos específicos: (1) identificar aquellas investigaciones que estudian la violencia de los clientes contra los trabajadores sociales; (2) analizar las características descriptivas de los estudios seleccionados; (3) analizar las características metodológicas de los estudios seleccionados; (4) identificar las variables asociadas a la violencia del cliente hacia el trabajador social. Para alcanzar estos objetivos, el método se basó en una revisión de la literatura sobre estudios de violencia hacia trabajadores sociales en España a través de las guías PRISMA-S (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). Los resultados muestran que este fenómeno existe, y arrojan luz sobre una situación que los trabajadores sociales viven en aislamiento. Explorando el fenómeno de manera descriptiva, la revisión proporciona información sobre las variables estudiadas y el alcance actual de la violencia hacia los trabajadores sociales por parte de los clientes. La falta de estudios sobre este tema subraya la necesidad de continuar investigando el problema desde una perspectiva tanto descriptiva como inferencial.

Palabras clave: agresión, cliente agresivo, usuario, trabajo, violencia laboral

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Workplace violence, a term used in the scientific literature to define acts of aggression and/or violence that occur in the work context, began to be studied in the 1980s (Turpin et al., 2021). The conceptualisation is a complex task because of the multidimensionality, the number of factors and the agents involved as well as for the diversity of contexts in which this violence may arise (Cannavò & Fioravanti, 2018; Shier et al., 2018).

OSHA (1996) was the first organization to define this concept as "psychological assault, threatening behaviour, or verbal abuse that occurs in the workplace" (p. 4). However, this article makes use of the conceptualization by Chappell and Di Martino (2006). These authors introduce into the definition who performs the violent action; that is, who is the causative agent. Workplace violence is understood as "any incident in which a worker is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public: patient, client and/or co-worker" (Chappell & Di Martino, 2006, p. 12).

The study of the incidence of violence in the workplace presents differences in countries and territories. In those countries that "it is a matter of public debate, the registered data is higher than in others" (Merecz et al., 2006, p. 442). Workplace violence affects practically all sectors and professional categories, although there are occupations with greater risk than others (Scaramuzzino, 2020). Specifically, professionals who work with vulnerable groups and with high levels of stress have higher incidence rates (Robelski et al., 2020; Vidal-Marti, 2020).

Workplace violence is a phenomenon with high incidence rates among health and social service workers (NASW, 2013; OSHA, 2016). The National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2020) of the United States found that health and social workers were five times more likely to suffer serious injuries from workplace violence than those in other sectors. Specifically, between 2011 and 2013, 23,000 acts of workplace violence were reported, 75% of them aimed at health and social service workers (NASW, 2020).

This article focuses on workplace violence towards social workers, more specifically when the client perpetrates the violent action. The first study of this phenomenon was published in 1978 (Crane, 1986), and since then research has highlighted the problem and its scope, although study of the subject has been uneven and irregular, and significant differences are

observed between countries (Jayaratne et al., 2004; Padyab et al., 2012; Zelnick et al., 2013).

In 2014, the National Library of Medicine of the United States established "workplace violence" as a Mesh term (Medical Subject Headings). The establishment of this search descriptor makes it easier to use this as a keyword in specialized databases in health sciences. In contrast, no keyword was found in the partner work and consequently different terms are used, such as: violence, aggression, injury, threat, assault, intimidation, harassment and victimizing. The word violence is the most used as a keyword or word in the title of an article. It is customary to combine it with the client concept, as a causal agent of violence towards the professional (Sicora et al., 2021; Sousa et al., 2014; Virkki, 2008).

Client violence towards social workers has multiple consequences, both for the workers themselves and the organization. Among workers affected, high levels of stress are observed (Enosh & Tzafrir, 2015; Koritsas et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2021; Shier et al., 2018), as well as fear (Kagan & Itzick, 2019; Lamothe et al., 2018), anxiety (Zychlinski et al., 2022), difficulty in thinking and acting (Enosh et al., 2013), demotivation (Lamothe et al., 2018) and depression (Lee et al., 2021).

At organization level, the effects include increased absenteeism (Malesa & Pillay, 2020), lower performance levels (Robson et al., 2014) and increased emotional distancing from the client (Lamothe et al., 2018; Tzafrir et al., 2015).

In Spain, workplace violence towards healthcare workers has been the subject of both descriptive and analytical studies (Babiarczyk et al., 2020; Serrano et al., 2019; Vidal-Martí & Pérez, 2015). Its study has revealed its incidence and risk factors; and consequently, there are review studies that make it possible to access the current knowledge. However, no review studies are found in which violence towards social workers is analyzed. This omission means that knowledge of client violence towards social workers in Spain is scattered. Therefore, a review article that collects and analyses the studies carried out is necessary to know what the current situation is, to better understand the phenomenon and is of great interest for the profession of social work.

Materials and Methods

This research has a main aim to identify the studies on client violence towards the social worker in Spain. This aim has four specific objectives to understand the phenomenon: (1) to identify those investigations that study the violence of clients against social workers; (2) to analyze the descriptive characteristics of the selected studies; (3) to analyze the methodological characteristics of the selected studies; (4) to identify the variables associated to client violence towards the social worker.

In order to achieve these objectives, the method was based on a review of the literature on studies of violence towards social workers in Spain. In it, the PRISMA-S guidelines [literature search extension for the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses] for descriptive and systematic reviews and meta-analyses were followed (Rethlefsen et al., 2021).

Search Strategy

An exhaustive search of the databases APA PsycNET, ÍnDICE CSIC, Educational Resource Information Center-ERIC and Scopus was conducted in the first quarter of 2022. A free search was also conducted of Scholar Google to identify studies not published in databases.

The search strategy was based on the following combination of search terms: cliente [client], trabajador social [social worker], aggression, violence, workplace violence, Spain, violencia ocupacional [workplace violence], agresión [aggression], violencia [violence] and type II.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for inclusion were published a) in scientific journals, doctoral theses and academic papers; b) until March 2022; c) in English or Spanish.
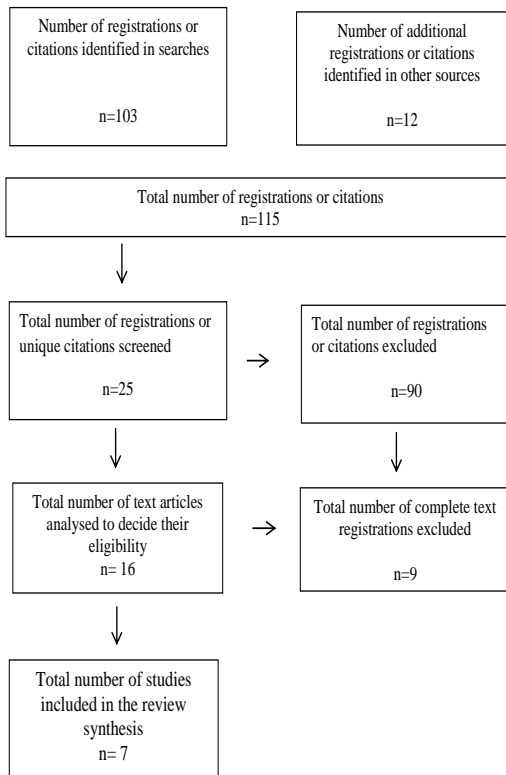
Articles of an informative nature and letters to the editor were excluded.

Selection of Studies

Figure 1 reflects the articles selection process. Initially 115 documents were found. Duplicated documents and those not related to the object of study were eliminated. Next, a new screening of the 25 selected documents was carried out, which consisted of reading each abstract. 9 documents were rejected. The next step was a complete reading of the 16 documents to confirm their suitability. The final selection is composed of 7 studies.

Figure 1.

Search strategy

Results

Analysis of the Descriptive Characteristics of the Review

Table 1 summarizes the principal descriptive characteristics, results and implications of the selected studies.

Violence towards social workers was studied in seven documents. The first research dates to 2008, and takes the form of a book and an article (see Table 1). In both documents, the authors present the results of the same research (Berasaluze & Berrio-Otxoa, 2008; Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze, 2008).

The time period with the most research was from 2015 to 2020, with 5 documents.

Four out of the seven documents are articles, two are books and one is an academic paper. Spanish was the language most used with six studies.

As regards services, there is variability: three studies analyzed social services in a broad context; two studied social work in health services; one focused on community care; and one on nursing homes. The aims of the reviewed studies are different. While they have in common the focus on and knowledge of violence against social workers, some reviewed studies focus on determining the occurrence, others on identifying the reasons, and still others focus on risk factors. Specifically, four studies focus on knowing the occurrence and variables involved in client violence against social workers, two studies identify violence as a risk factor and evaluate what measures should be taken to eradicate the phenomenon and one analyzes the causes that explain why the phenomenon occurs.

Regarding the results, the seven studies reviewed state that social workers have experienced client violence.

Regarding the involvement, it should be noted that the four articles reviewed establish the need to make visible the violence of clients towards social workers. The other three studies focus on the need to design prevention or treatment programmes when violence has already occurred.

Table 1.
Descriptive characteristics of the studies

Reference, Language, Service	Purpose	Main Results	Implication
Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze, 2008, Spanish, Social services	(1) To describe and characterize the group of social workers. (2) To identify the professional needs of social workers.	(1) Collecting information is the social worker's most frequent task. (2) The social worker performs both direct and indirect intervention, but direct takes more time than indirect. (3) 61.8% of social workers describe the situation of the profession as satisfactory. (4) 7 out of 10 social workers said they had experienced a risk situation in their professional practice.	(1) Make visible the professional situation of social workers.
Herrero, 2018, Spanish, Health services	To analyze the aggressions carried out by patients, relatives or companions against the health centre professionals during a period of four years.	(1) 254 attacks were reported. (2) Verbal aggressions were the most frequent (76%). (3) Dissatisfaction with the care received (33.5%) is the main cause of aggression. (4) The patients (67.3%) carried out the aggressions. (5) 10.2% of the personnel who suffered an aggression (physical or verbal) required medical leave. (6) 7.4% of the professionals attacked filed a legal complaint.	(1) Design programmes aimed at the prevention and treatment of aggression. Its design must take into account the job category, the type of service and the professional field.
Rincón-del Toro et al., 2016, Spanish, Health services	Characterize violence in primary care in the Community of Madrid.	(1) 1,157 attacks were reported. (2) Non-health personnel showed less risk of being physically attacked than health personnel. (3) 5.9% of the professionals reported the attacks.	(1) Develop training plans aimed at all professionals related to the prevention and management of aggression. (2) Provide support and advice to professionals to avoid violence by users.

Reference, Language, Service	Purpose	Main Results	Implication
Vidal-Martí & Pérez-Testor, 2015, English, Nursing homes	Analyze aggressions towards professionals who work in health centres carried out by patients, families or companions during four years.	(1) 61.2% of the professionals were attacked by the elderly people they attend to in the last year. (2) There is a significant relationship between stress and aggression. (3) Verbal aggression is the most frequent type of aggression. Specifically, demands are the subtype of aggression most often expressed by professionals and occur on a daily basis. (4) Men attack professionals more than women users.	(1) Make visible the violent action carried out by the user towards the professionals of the residences for the elderly in the city of Barcelona. Visibility as a first step to address a problem that is not treated in residences.
Ureña et al., 2017, Spanish, Social services	Analyze and identify the aggressions of users towards community social services.	(1) 12 attacks were reported during the period from 2010 to 2017. (2) Primary care social workers are at greater risk. (3) Only physical attacks are reported.	(1) Make visible the risk of aggression towards social workers. (2) Adapt care to prevent the attacks and implement protection measures.

Analysis of the Methodological Characteristics of the Review

Table 2 summarizes the principal methodological characteristics of the selected studies. Specifically, the kind of research, instruments used, the size of the sample, the type of design and the dimensions were analyzed. All studies agree on the type of research and design: quantitative research and type of descriptive design. Five out of seven documents use the questionnaire as an instrument and two use the form.

There is variability in the sample and six out of seven documents make explicit the number of participants. However, only two out of the seven articles reviewed in the sample are related to social workers. The other articles involve other professionals (educators, doctors ...).

Table 2.
Methodological characteristics of the studies

Reference	Method	Instrument	Sample	Type of design	Dimensions
Berasaluze & Berrio-Otxoa, 2008 Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze, 2008	Quantitative study	Questionnaire	370	Descriptive	Socio-demographic characteristics Occupational-professional Professional association
Rincón-del Toro et al., 2016	Quantitative study	Online forms	11,525	Descriptive	Socio-demographic characteristics Occupational-professional
Vidal-Martí & Pérez-Testor, 2015	Quantitative study	Ad hoc questionnaire	67	Descriptive	Socio-demographic characteristics Occupational-professional
Ureña et al., 2019	Quantitative study	Questionnaire	--	Descriptive	Socio-demographic characteristics Occupational-professional Professional association
Herrero, 2018	Quantitative study	Online forms	6,739	Descriptive	Socio-demographic characteristics Occupational-professional Professional association

| Cobos, 2019 | Quantitative study | Self-administered questionnaire | 172 | Descriptive | Socio-demographic characteristics Occupational-professional |

Table 3.
Identified elements of the studies

Emergent categories	Variables	Reference
Acts of violence towards the professional	Number of incidents	Berasaluze & Berrio-Otxoa (2008) Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze (2008) Vidal-Martí & Pérez-Testor (2015) Rincón-del Toro et al. (2016) Ureña et al. (2017) Herrero (2018) Cobos (2019)
	Types (physical, verbal, threats, insults...	Vidal-Martí & Pérez-Testor (2015) Ureña et al. (2017) Herrero (2018) Cobos (2019)
Authors	Authors (client, family and companions)	Berasaluze & Berrio-Otxoa (2008) Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze (2008) Vidal-Martí & Pérez-Testor (2015) Rincón-del Toro et al. (2016) Ureña et al. (2017) Herrero (2018) Cobos (2019)
Risk factor	Characteristics of the author: (1) aggressive profile, (2) gender.	(1) Herrero (2018) (1) Cobos (2019) (2) Ureña et al. (2017)
	Characteristics of the professionals	Ureña et al. (2017) Herrero (2018)
	Service: (1) public/private,	(1) (2) Berasaluze & Berrio-Otxoa

	(2) type of service	(2008)
		Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze (2008)
	Consequences	Cobos (2019)
Following the acts of violence	Number of complaints	Herrero (2018)
		Cobos (2019)
	Extent of support received	Ureña et al. (2017)

In relation to the dimensions, similar themes are observed. Four out of the seven studies focus on elements related to the professional association and all documents studied focus on the work area.

Identification of the Variables Associated to Violence of the Client Towards Social Workers to Improve Awareness of the Phenomenon

In this review, the different variables were divided into four main groups: (1) acts of violence, (2) the authors of the violent action, (3) risk factors and (4) subsequent consequences of the violent action. Table 3 summarizes the items identified in these categories.

The number of incidents and the agent who commits the act of violence are the variables studied in all documents. There are differences between the studies as regards the number of acts of violence. Two studies present similar values in this regard (70% and 75%) (Berasaluze & Berrio-Otxoa, 2008; Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze, 2008; Ureña et al., 2017), but differ in the average time, although both focus on social services. In health services, the number is a value below 1: 0.4% (Herrero, 2018) and 0.17% (Rincón-del Toro, 2016). In community services, 66.3% of social workers reported having experienced violence, defining the phenomenon as a "natural occurrence".

Clients are the authors of the violence in all research from 67.2% (Herrero, 2018) to 92% (Berasaluze & Berrio-Otxoa, 2008; Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze, 2008). The client's family was identified as the author of the violence in two
out of seven studies at lower percentages, from 20.7% (Cobos, 2019) to 14% (Ureña et al., 2017).

The type of violence is another variable analyzed. It has been categorized as *acts of violence*. Physical and verbal violence is the category most frequently analyzed in four out of seven studies, with values ranging from 1.63% (Herrero, 2018) to 50% (Ureña et al., 2017) for physical violence and from 3.1% (Herrero, 2018) to 71% (Cobos, 2019) for verbal violence. Verbal violence is divided into two categories (threats and insults) and analyzed in two out of seven documents, with values ranging from 42% (Ureña et al., 2017) to 18.4% (Cobos, 2019) for threats and 15.7% (Cobos, 2019) to 8% (Ureña et al., 2017) for insults.

The characteristics of the worker was one of the variables analyzed in three out of seven studies, with gender (Herrero, 2018; Vidal-Martí & Pérez-Testor, 2015) and professional category (Cobos, 2019; Vidal-Martí & Pérez-Testor, 2015) being established as risk factors. Client characteristics was another variable analyzed by three out of seven studies, and focusing on gender (Ureña et al., 2017) and aggressive profile (Cobos, 2019; Herrero, 2018).

However, the research studies differ as regards the variables analyzed and therefore do not present results that can be compared one with another. The variables type of service (Berasaluze & Berrio-Otxoa, 2008; Berrio-Otxoa & Berasaluze, 2008), consequences (Cobos, 2019), reporting (Herrero, 2018) and degree of support received (Ureña et al., 2017) were analyzed in one out of the seven studies.

Discussion

The results of the reviewed articles show that client violence towards social workers is a common phenomenon. The data show a low number of studies, a variability of variables studied and knowledge that is difficult to compare between studies. However, the review is a good tool to identify this variability and emphasizes the need for further research.

The low number of studies found to carry out the review is a first consideration. We found three possible explanations. The first is that the shortage is not typical of this country, but of the object of study. Few countries have investigated client violence towards social workers and this review contributes to those made by Australia (Koritsas et al., 2010), Canada (Kosny & Eakin, 2008; Lamothe et al., 2018; Macdonald & Sirotich, 2005),

Finland (Virkki, 2008), United States (Jayaratne et al., 2004; Newhill, 1996; Newhill & Wexler, 1997; Shields & Kiser, 2003), UK (Harris & Leather, 2012; Littlechild, 2005; Robson et al., 2014), Israel (Enosh & Tzafir, 2015; Enosh et al., 2013, 2015; Zychlinski et al., 2022), Iran (Padyab et al., 2012; Padyab, Ghazinour et al., 2013; Padyab, Richter et al., 2013) and Chile (Calderón-Orellana et al., 2022). Therefore, the reduced number of studies reviewed is not exclusive to Spain, but it is in accordance with the study of the phenomenon.

A second explanation is the complexity of the object of study. The lack of a consensual definition of workplace violence, of standardized instruments and the lack of culture for addressing violence in the workplace would be some of the elements that would explain this complexity and the difficulty of studying the phenomenon (Robson et al., 2014; Vidal-Martí & Pérez-Testor, 2017).

In addition to this complexity of the object of study, there is the variability of services where the social work professional works. Working in social, health and community services and intervening with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with functional diversity, high levels of functional dependency, mental health or in child protection systems are some of the professional services where social workers work.

At the same time, it is accentuated in the case of social work, because it contradicts the professional mission; that is, the task of the social worker is to intervene and help people with vulnerability and, the violence that the professional can experience might be interpreted as a risk to the labour force, but hardly as a violation of rights (Enosh & Tzafir, 2015; Zelnick et al., 2013). Therefore, studying an uncomfortable phenomenon, even if it has serious consequences for the health of the professionals, could explain the low number of investigations about the study of the phenomenon.

The third explanation is not exclusive to this research, but the result obtained reinforces all the conceptual, methodological and axiological difficulties previously mentioned.

A second consideration to note is that the results show that the studies reviewed have focused on the description of the phenomenon, from a cross-sectional design, to know the occurrence and facilitate the visibility of the problem that affects the health of social workers.

However, addressing the clients' violence towards social workers requires complex responses (Kagan & Itzick, 2019). Therefore, studying the risk factors in depth will be basic and necessary in the future to know the phenomenon more accurately and consequently will facilitate the design of prevention and protection measures (Enosh & Tzafir, 2015; Zelnick et al., 2013).

The characteristics of the client, the professional, the tasks that professionals perform, the culture of the organization, prevention policies, and the environment where the professional task is carried out are some of the risk factors to be studied (Brown, 1986; Munobwa et al., 2021; Robson et al., 2014; Tesi et al., 2019).

A third consideration to highlight is the study of the investigated dimensions. Specifically, four out of the seven studies reviewed analyze violence from a professional association perspective. This means that collegiate organizations are concerned about the effects and consequences of workplace violence.

Therefore, these organizations, aware that clients violence against social workers is a health problem, have been promoters of studies to make visible a hidden reality and, based on the results obtained, establish legal and material measures such as books and guides on prevention and action (Alvarez, 2008, 2009; Santás, 2010).

Johnson (1998) affirms that traditionally the prevention measures of the governments have been guides and documents of good practices. The review shows that in the Spanish case, this function has been performed by professional associations. In Spain, each collegiate organization acts in a specific area. In the analysis of the seven studies reviewed, two organizations that have been promoters of the research are identified. This means that the knowledge is not homogeneous throughout Spain, but focused on two specific areas: Euskadi and Madrid.

The study period is a fourth consideration to analyze. The review shows that workplace violence towards social workers began to be the subject of study in 2008, intensifying from 2015 to the present. This progression over time is also observed in the literature. Although there are studies from 1990 to 2008 (Balloch et al., 1998; McPhaul et al., 2008; Winstanley & Hales, 2008), the research intensifies from 2010 onwards (Enosh & Tzafrir, 2015; Lamothe et al., 2018; Sousa et al., 2014; Truter & Fouché, 2019).

One of the surprising aspects of the analysis of the reviewed studies is the delay in studying the phenomenon. The first studies reviewed date from 2008, which means that before that date client violence against social workers had not been studied, which contrasts with the study of other countries such as the United States (Newhill, 1996; Newhill & Wexler, 1997) or the UK (Balloch et al., 1998; Littlechild, 1995).

A fifth consideration to ponder is who the author of violence against social workers is. The results establish that the client is not the only agent and show that the family or other companions can also be agents (Harris & Leather, 2012; Koritsas et al., 2010; Padyab et al., 2012; Padyab, Gazhinour et al., 2013). This aspect differs from other studies and can be explained by two facts. The first fact is that the studies reviewed analyze different services; in particular, four different types are examined (social, health, community and nursing homes). And the second is because five reviewed studies help to know the reality.

Finally, one aspect was not found in the reviewed articles: frequency. In the seven documents, the variable number of incidents is studied, but in none of them is this data related to time.

Different authors (Enosh & Tzafir, 2015; Enosh et al., 2013; Munobwa et al., 2021) affirm that the violence of clients towards social workers is mild, but continuous over time (weekly/monthly). This persistence of violence causes harmful consequences in the health of the professionals.

Mild acts of violence are actions such as threats, insults, verbal abuse, disavowals, intimidation and actions of verbal and nonverbal coercion (Enosh & Tzafir, 2013; Lamothe, 2018).

In summary, this review is a first step in finding out what research has been done, what methodology has been used, and the variables studied. This knowledge allows a better understanding of the phenomenon, to identify future lines of research in order to address and as far as possible eradicate client violence towards social workers.

Conclusions

This study shows that there is client violence against social workers. It also shows that there is client violence towards social workers, generating consequences for the professional and the professional environment.

Nevertheless, the results obtained in the review are neither significant nor sufficiently representative because the number of studies is low, different services are studied and the variables analyzed also vary, making them difficult to understand and analyze. Even so, and while aware of these limitations, we can highlight three elements that the studies which were analyzed in the review share in common.

Firstly, they are exploratory studies, descriptive in design, providing an insight into the situation. This knowledge is a picture of the situation, which allows us to approach a diagnosis, and begin to study the problem in greater detail.

Secondly, they use ad hoc instruments that enable exploration and understanding of the phenomenon. These instruments are good tools to begin study. However, the subjectivity of the violence construct and the need to review the validity of the instruments, require the number of instruments to be revised or expanded.

And a third element is that the language used is Spanish. Almost no studies were found in English, which means that the results serve to raise the profile of the problem in the territory itself.

In summary, the main objective of this manuscript is to present a systematic review of client violence towards social workers in Spain and, to a large extent, it is fulfilled. The four specific objectives are also met, because the manuscript provides insight into the descriptive and methodological characteristics of the studies and the variables analysed.

However, the limited number of studies, the variability of variables studied and their descriptive nature allow an approximation of the phenomenon, but further research is needed to understand the incidence, risk factors, consequences of the phenomenon and other characteristics that help to describe and explain the phenomenon in greater detail.

The manuscript shines a light on the problem of violence experienced by social workers and expressed through their collegiate organizations, which are responsible for providing coping tools when violence has occurred (Alvarez, 2008; 2009; Santás, 2010). Accordingly, this review is a first step, but it is necessary to continue this research in order to minimize this occupational risk.

Any review study involves making decisions that may have affected the results presented. Aware of these limitations, we present two possible

constraints. The first is that errors or biases may have been made when the bibliographic search was performed, leading to some studies not being considered. A second is that the languages used in the databases were Spanish and English, and other languages were omitted.

In summary, this research highlights the problem of workplace violence of social workers in Spain, identifies the studies carried out and the variables studied, but it is essential to continue this research in order to answer three questions: 1) to determine the real scope of the problem at a global level, 2) to understand the risk factors and 3) establish protection and prevention measures to improve the health of professionals and their environment.

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